Constructions of teaching in an elite university: A case study

Thesis

Constructions of Teaching in an Elite University:

A Case Study

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Contents

Abstract

A case study research was conducted to identify constructs of undergraduate teaching in an elite, research-intensive university. Qualitative data collection and analysis involving transcripts from over 40 semi-structured interviews with heads of teaching committees from each department or faculty of the university as well as heads of several other committees and other key stakeholders was carried out. In the analysis, use was made too of relevant archival materials, publicly available data from the university, and governmental reports or documents.

The university offers courses to its undergraduate students that range from interdisciplinary to very discipline-specific and operates a system of personalised tuitions that is at the heart, and thereby defines, excellent teaching. The high quality of its students, who are attracted by the research renown of the university, is regarded as the trademark of the elite institution. Culturally, the sense-making that supports the procedures and structures of the university is based on the assumption that excellent teachers are intrinsically associated with excellent research. Consequently, teaching excellence is recognised but is less well rewarded or acknowledged as compared to research. Excellence in teaching is further constrained by organisation-wide arrangements in academic staff promotion that favour research.

Operating in a super-complex contemporary higher education landscape, this elite university projects a "mirror-image" of itself both externally and internally, the mirror image itself being justified by the ongoing undergraduate achievements and application rates. Great reliance is placed on external examiners to monitor the high standards of achievement, the effect of which is to stifle collegiality about teaching. Institutional governance structures and procedures enable the organisation to operate a cybernetic (self-correcting) model of organisational control, where change is perceived as adjustments: incremental and subtle.

Figures and Tables

Appendices

Abbreviations

This list contains only the commonly used abbreviations found in the thesis (*)

University A: A fictional name adopted for ethical reasons in this thesis, in place of the actual name of the university;

AOT: Administration Office for Teaching. A central office within the university responsible for the management of its teaching arrangements;

HoTC: Head of a Teaching Committee;

LoP: List of Persons. Refers to a list of contacts, from each department or faculty of the university, provided by the AOT for my research purposes;

F: Faculty;

D: Department;

OTT: Office for Teaching Technology. A centre for research in teaching technology within the university;

(*) All other abbreviations are not disclosed for ethical reasons.

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Finally, but most importantly, I dedicate this labour of love to my partner, "το μπριζολάκι μου", for her unconditional love and support.

"It's the law of requisite variety, which says that if you want to make sense of a complex world, you've got to have an internal system that is equally complex." (Karl E. Weick)

Preface

I started this EdD course because I have an unending thirst for knowledge on what makes one a good teacher in higher education. I have every interest in finding that out because I am currently a teacher in higher education. I got my current job while I was going through this EdD course and it was a dream come true: it is something that I wanted to become from very early on in my life. However, this EdD course transformed my understandings of what it means to be a teacher - and for that matter, good teaching - in higher education. And this transformation was a positive one, a greatly improving one.

The major transformation was at the highest level, that of identity: I have been educated in natural sciences and I considered myself a natural scientist, a biologist. This course educated me in social sciences and so I feel now that I have a dual identity: a natural science/social science one. I have also learned to appreciate the written word much more than I expected, but to be very critical about it. Thanks to my supervisor, I have learned to always ask not the question 'says what?' but the question 'says who?'

And with this always in my mind, I have come to realise the power of a person's belief system in shaping the reality around them. And in turn, I have come to value a person's belief system as their major source of change or no-change for their own improvement. I have learned to appreciate the power of organisational research in revealing hidden meanings within society and uncovering the process of sense-making within societies.

But most of all, I have learned how to be reflexive. This is a trait that I will always be thankful of. It has all been a worthwhile struggle!

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

In this section I will provide an overview of where I am pitching my research project and what theoretical frameworks I have used to design my research and analyse my results. I am providing the reader with signposts on what are the research questions that my research will address and thereby what is relevant to my research. My approach is guided by extensive literature reviews that are presented and analysed in this first chapter.

After setting the stage of enquiry and analysing what my research topic is in the following section, I begin, in the subsequent sections, to frame my research project within the theoretical foundations of my approach.

When I started with my research project I intended that my research methods should aim at establishing what are the good teaching practices within an elite university that bring about learning to its undergraduate students. It became gradually evident to me that the organisational context and its institutional underpinnings, the ways the university handles issues of accountability and external audit and the organisational structure it puts in place to perceive and respond to conflicting and complex demands, have a far more decisive impact on the ways teaching practices are managed, implemented and, for that matter, are effective.

Consequently, the choices I made in designing my study became clearer: instead of enquiring about the views of the academic staff of the university on how effective *they think* their teaching practices are, I had to refocus on how effectively their teaching practices are managed and implemented; instead of focusing upon student intake data, and the views of the undergraduate students on how effectively they think they are taught within the university, I changed to enquire about how the university construes teaching

within the organisation, and what structures and procedures the university has in place to make its teaching effective. I had to look at how this higher education institution functions as an organisation and what it does that helps it maintain its elite status.

These choices were confounded with my own ambitions which were to understand how a university functions as an organization that implements, monitors and improves its teaching, since I am now an academic teacher in a similar institution in another country. I was privileged to be able to carry out this research project as an "outsider", living in the physical vicinity of the university but having no teaching requirements within it. I chose to use as my main research sample academics who chair the teaching committees that are at the two-way conduit between the university and their colleagues. Primarily, the research sample consisted of academics who teach *and* manage teaching practices, who monitor teaching processes and outcomes *and* communicate them through the organisational system.

Reaching these conclusions about my research sample and research focus was not as clear-cut as I originally anticipated. On the one hand, it was becoming apparent to me that good (and bad) teaching practices are easy to identify, and prescribe for that matter, but not a trademark of an elite academic institution. Auditing authorities applaud the good teaching practices and league tables praise them highly! On the other hand, I soon realised that learning and indeed effective learning is definitely not the concern of the academics that I have interviewed during my research. The overriding impression was that learning was a given within an elite institution, it was an inherent trademark of its clientele. They were 'bound to learn'!

Dwelling on the literature, I have realised that the issues that I need to address lie beyond the dilemmas and debates of what is considered good (or bad) teaching practices. The literature review showed me that there are messy issues that become even more controversial when one takes into account the major changes that are happening in higher education in the last few decades:

• Massification, i.e. more and more undergraduates in universities; that may result in the need for…

• Managerialism, i.e. an emphasis upon management control rather than collegialism in ever-expanding higher education institutions; that may necessitate the setting of…

• Performance outcomes, i.e. the need (actual or imposed) for higher education institutions to operate more like commercial enterprises and measure and report on everything to external agencies; that may set the benchmarks for an ever-increasing reliance on…

• Accountability, i.e. the imposition of quality standards for the university 'products' and the services they provide; an overwhelming set of checks and balances that may invariably impose more…

• System complexity, i.e. the ever-changing landscape of higher education institutions; governmental aims are diversifying and fallible, organisational security is inconceivable, the future is unpredictable.

The order in which these notions (messy issues) are tiered just above is critical in understanding the context of this thesis. These notions move from indisputable and measurable social phenomena (mass education) gradually into disputable and immeasurable social abstractions (complexity) and never in a linear logical fashion (manner). There is always a 'may' there that assumes a 'may not'! The attempt in my thesis is to identify this fashion, this manner, and this will have to be done in one academic organisation (a case study).

Under these circumstances, I start by trying to establish that the philosophical approaches of objectivism and constructivism (and their various forms and branches) as means of identifying what is good and effective teaching are insufficient on their own to delineate whether constructs of teaching within a university are good or bad or even result in effective learning. Effective learning never was and will never be *merely* the outcome of a good teaching method(s). As will be shown, there are many factors that influence what

can be described as effective learning within a higher education institution. This thesis is not about identifying good or bad teaching methods in a university! It is about how messy issues formulate constructs of teaching and help a university maintain its elite status.

Subsequently, I explore the effects of massification of higher education, analyse the expansion of managerialism in higher education, and show how research, performance orientation and accountability work their way in generating system complexity in higher education organisations.

I draw upon three different theoretical frameworks:

1) That of Karl E. Weick, an organisational theorist who advanced the concept of loose coupling of academic organisations, the concept of sense-making process of organisations, i.e. how people within organisations make sense of their environment and act, and the concept of organisational complexity as a means of understanding action.

2) That of Burton R. Clark, a sociologist writing with an institutional perspective about the connections of knowledge and power in shaping higher education's institutional evolution and the prospects of institutional change. Clark's national and international explorations of structural evolutions within institutions made me realise that I should not dwell in a historical *perspective* but rather in a future *prospective*. And who else to turn to when it comes to perceiving the future of higher education than…

3) Ronald Barnett, a sociologist theorist who advanced the concepts of 'performative knowledge' in modern universities where academic identity is constantly re-shaped and re-invented and complexity should be acknowledged as a thing of the present and the future.

I reach the conclusion that my research aim on identifying constructs of teaching should be framed within three theoretical frameworks termed as loose coupling, institutional change and performativity, respectively.

These frameworks operate as guiding lights, as torches so to speak, to find my way in the dark!

1.2 Setting the stage of enquiry

The title of my thesis is 'Constructions of Teaching in an Elite University: A Case Study'. The first important element here is the search for constructs of teaching. The second important element is the adjective elite: What is defined as elite? What makes a university elite? The third important element is university, that is higher education. The fourth important element is case study.

For reasons of clarity it is important to state and make clear that the term 'construct' throughout my thesis has a dual meaning: 1) it is used as reference to any statement (written or oral) about what constitutes teaching, and in particular 'good' teaching. 2) it is used as reference to practical activities and actions taken by designated people within the university to structure and bring about student learning.

There is one word in the title of my thesis that gives it focus: This word is *elite*. In its modern usage, the noun *elite* has changed in two ways: Firstly, elite has been used as an adjective, a denominator of some quality such as, for example, elite class, elite fashion, elite brand. Secondly, elite has come to be a descriptor of a group of people or objects or a league considered to be the best in a particular society or category especially because of their association with power, talent or wealth. In this thesis elite is used as a combination of both of these changes (Meyer 1977; Farazmand 1999; Alvesson and Robertson 2006, p. 1127; Williams 2006; Bergh and Fink 2009; Palfreyman and Tapper 2009).

The word *elite* has been associated, in conjunction with its derivative *elitism*, with arrogance, acquisition of privileges and snobbery. Using the meaning of the word elite as a descriptor of 'the best', Williams suggests that the past state "*also communicates the idea of a done deal that all elites are keen to impress on us, something that has been sorted and has the air of finality about it*" (Williams 2006, p. 33). This statement is true for both the actual meaning of the noun *elite*: 'the person chosen' and its later use as an adjective that means 'the best'. Being acidulous, Williams (2006) makes a philological jest with the characteristics of power elites and suggests: "*in a further effort to win our acceptance the*

elites through the centuries have attempted, quite successfully, another verbal hijack and a more extended meaning of the word which describes them and their activities. Elites thus mean not just "the chosen ones" <u>but also</u> "the best""(Williams 2006, p.33). This dual meaning of the word as 'the chosen' and 'the best' is what creates confusion. Subsequently, the adjective *elite* came to describe more often than not 'the best' among a league, alluding also to its first meaning 'the chosen'. In terms of higher education the term has been used to describe well-known universities (such as the Ivy League in the USA) throughout the world (Longden 2000; De Fraja 2002; Marginson 2006; Marginson 2008; Palfreyman and Tapper 2009) and in higher education literature the term elite is used mostly in conjunction with the noun elitism but in most cases is descriptive of the word 'best' (Longden 2000; Salter and Tapper 2000; De Fraja 2002; Marginson 2006; Morley and Aynsley 2007; Marginson 2008; Palfreyman and Tapper 2009). In research literature on organisation studies the term has also been used exclusively as meaning 'best' (see for example Farazmand 1999; Alvesson and Robertson 2006). In particular, the work of Farazmand (1999) is outstanding if one wants to understand the deeper ramifications of the word elite in modern society.

To conclude, the word elite is what gives focus in my thesis. It is used as an adjective that means 'best' to describe 'one of the best' among a league of universities. It is defined as 'one of the best' due to its high scores in world university league tables like the THE-QS (Times Higher Education (THE)-Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)) World University Rankings that ranks the 'Top 200 World Universities'.

Indeed, the subject of my case study is a known university that is research-intensive. The term research-intensive is descriptive of its research output in terms of numbers of publications of research papers, research grants obtained and research facilities in operation. I will use the word elite as meaning 'one of the best' and remain oblivious to any other meanings, connotations or nuances of the word.

So, what I am researching and trying to find is '*what constructs of teaching are to be*

found in one of the best universities"? Just because this university is considered one of the best, I do not assume that it will have constructs of good teaching. I will have to identify the construct(s) and critically analyse if and how they are conducive of good teaching, bearing in mind the overarching theoretical assumption that good teaching brings about good and effective learning that leads to the attainment of knowledge.

1.3 Foundations

I start my search for theoretical foundations for my research by trying to define what, for my purposes, constitutes knowledge. Definitions abound, but I found no other more simple and powerful than that of the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. Habermas introduced his proposition of the existence of three kinds of knowledge trying to describe how the physical survival of humans, the relations with one another and human development depended on the ability of humans to gain different types of knowledge (Habermas 1971). These kinds of knowledge are:

1) the *instrumental* knowledge needed for efficient intervention into the natural world;

2) the *moral-practical* knowledge needed to establish relations between humans; and

3) the *emancipatory* knowledge needed to overcome social and psychological structures of power and repression (Habermas 1971).

Habermas (1971) proposed that knowledge is rooted both in historical and existing social structures and it is, thereby, historically and socially constructed and directly linked to human interests, means of social organisation, and past, present, and future problems facing society (Ewert 1991). As argued by Ewert (1991) "*knowledge-constitutive interests can be defined exclusively as a function of the objectively constituted problems of the preservation of life that have been solved by the cultural form of existence as such*" (Habermas (1971), cited in Ewert, 1991, p. 347). For Habermas, the three basic human interests are our interest in controlling nature, our interest in social harmony and our interest in individual growth and each has its origin in a different problem related to human

survival (Habermas 1971). The three human interests develop in three different social media: work, interaction (through language) and relations of power (Habermas 1971). Work, interaction and relations of power are the conditions for the development of three corresponding forms of science: the empirical-analytic, the interpretive or hermeneutic and the critical (Ewert 1991) so the knowledge generated through these sciences is *instrumental*, *moral-practical* (understanding), and *emancipatory*, respectively (Ewert 1991).

Habermas never discussed learning in his writing. Someone who did is Mezirow (Mezirow 1990; Mezirow 1991, p. 73), with his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. Applying Habermas's theory to education caused Mezirow to distinguish three kinds of learning: *instrumental*, *communicative* (moral-practical), and *emancipatory* (Mezirow 1990; Mezirow 1991, p. 73; Kreber and Cranton 2000, p. 483). Through an elegant exploration of Mezirow's theories, Kreber and Cranton (2000, p. 482) show that these kinds of learning should be regarded as the goals of any pedagogical approach in higher education.

Who would have thought, then, that there will still be contemporary calls for the 'recovery of knowledge'(Young 2008)? Does it make sense to ask for the 'recovery of knowledge'? It might be odd to read about calls for research on 'recovering knowledge' (see Young 2008) but as Barnett (Barnett 2009) puts it, this may not be such an odd suggestion. Barnett observes (Barnett 2009, p. 430) that the debate about knowledge, the one intimately linked and undeniably professed to be the subject of higher education appears to be absent from most debates in higher education. Taking the UK as one example, research on higher education in the years after the Dearing Report (Dearing 1997) has flourished and one can say that we now know more about higher education matters, although the Dearing Report contains little mention of knowledge as a major component within the curriculum (Barnett 2009, p. 430).

Why is it still then that we need to look for the recovery of knowledge in higher

education curricula? Barnett suggests that these fundamental dispositions and qualities that are thought to be desirable for higher education students to possess are still absent from university graduates and this is not a phenomenon observed in only one country (Barnett 2009). Are the higher education systems, then, failing to encourage the formation of good dispositions and qualities (Barnett 2009) in undergraduate students? The answer to this lies critically in the definition of the 'performative student' (Lyotard 1984; Marshall 1999; Usher 2006), a student more 'tuned' towards acquiring a mode 2 conception of knowledge (Gibbons *et al.* 1994), a type of knowledge that would help an individual solve practical problems, problems that demand answers, rather than being a recipient of mode 1 conception of knowledge, the propositional academic knowledge (Gibbons *et al.* 1994). Is higher education to blame the 'performative students' for their qualities, inclinations and dispositions? Barnett's answer is No, because this is an individual that is trying to make sense of a supercomplex world (Barnett 2009), where acquisition of either knowledge or skills, or even both, does not seem sufficient enough.

Barnett defines supercomplexity as "*the presence of proliferating and competing frameworks of comprehension, many of which present as unreasonable ideologies, a situation that yields no definite resolution*" (Barnett 2000a, p. 75; Barnett 2000b). Barnett calls for a notion of *being*, which is a state of existence highly adaptable in a supercomplex world, to be the end result of the attainment of dispositions and qualities of the higher education student (Barnett 2009, p. 439). *Being* is inextricably associated with coming to know and to understand, it is a state of constant acquisition of knowledge, an existence identified by its dispositions (Barnett 2009). Barnett suggests that "*the kind of discipline-based knowledge that characteristically forms the basis for higher education could help to form dispositions and qualities that offer a form of human being that just may be adequate to a situation of supercomplexity*" (Barnett 2009, p. 439).

It can be argued that this kind of philosophical stance, current as it is, is not easily debatable, although it has its critics (Gingell and Winch 1999), because it offers no

immediate answers to practical debates about the current status of higher education and how higher education can help an individual. Gingell and Winch (1999) argue that Barnett's meta-understanding(s) of the nature of higher education do not take into context the fact that such a concept of *being* has to be addressed at all the levels of the education system, not just merely in higher education. It can also be argued that Barnett's propositions about the 'end of knowledge' (Barnett 1993; Barnett 2000d) presume that debates about the philosophy of knowledge in higher education have come to a dead-end (Gingell and Winch 1999). I believe that this cannot be entirely true and practically defensible. What the literature suggests to be true is the idea that 'performative knowledge', expressed as an increased effort for acquisition of skills (Marshall 1999; Usher 2006; Barnett 2009), is replacing mode 1 knowledge, the conventional academic propositional knowledge (Gibbons *et al.* 1994; Barnett 2009, p. 431), in modern higher education (Bereiter 1994; Barnett 2009).

Although Barnett (Barnett 2009) makes the distinction between knowledge and knowing, such that knowledge is a set of collectively attested understandings of the world and knowing is the individual's personal constructs of the world (Barnett 2009), to my understanding this is a distinction between two theoretical understandings of the meaning of knowledge. The first (knowledge) comes from the proposition of Popper (Popper 1972; Popper 1975; Bereiter 1994, p. 22) on the existence of knowledge beyond material entities and an individual's perception of the world. We can then talk about knowledge as being objective, something to be sought after and it is sought after by the elimination of error (Corson 1991). The second (knowledge) comes from the proposition of Dewey (Marshall 1982; Corson 1991) that knowledge has an evolutionary aspect in the human mind and it is in essence what seems to 'work', what seems to satisfy objective criteria in a pragmatist's point of view (Corson 1991). For Dewey-under his definition of knowledge-the processes of learning assume priority over knowledge itself (Corson 1991) and the processes of learning equate to knowing in a dynamic, evolving state of being (Corson 1991). To follow

Bereiter (1994) and Corson (1991) in their line of thought, either the critical rationalist approach of Popper (Popper 1975) or the pragmatist approach of Dewey (Marshall 1982; Corson 1991) understand knowledge as an evolutionary process. The advent of critical rationalism and pragmatism turned scientific attention towards the human elements of teaching, the teacher-learner relationship (Phillips 1995; Brown 2009), and this in turn generated schools of thought on the best possible ways learning can be achieved.

One such school of thought is objectivism that comes in various disguises such as instructivism, behaviourism, empiricism (positivism) (Platt 1996; Geelan 1997; Cox and Hassard 2005; Brown 2009). Objectivism is the foundation of the traditional model of education where knowledge can be transmitted to students through passive instructional means (Peikoff 1994; Nola 1997; Rowlands *et al.* 2001). Objectivism (and its various disguises as instructivism or positivism) (Geelan 1997; Brown 2009) maintains a teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning: Knowledge is the possession of the university teacher and it is *transmitted* to the students during teaching. This is an enduring mechanism that gains popularity for three absolutely fundamental reasons: 1) Academics know how to be productive researchers, but unlike teachers at other levels, they rarely receive any pedagogical instruction (Seldin 1984), while in-service staff development programs provide virtually no incentive to attend and academic staff are rarely exposed to role models who demonstrate effective teaching (Marsh and Hattie 2002) 2) Modern advances in communications, media and electronic resources place a heavy reliance on the transmissive mode of information 3) Modern universities feel increasingly pressured to expand their research capabilities and engage to a greater or lesser extent with scientific research (Clark 1997; Clark 1998).

Another school of thought is constructivism, the major movement of social constructivism and its various disguises of idealism, post-structuralism, post-modernism and interpretivism (Entwistle 1987; Phillips 1995; Geelan 1997; Entwistle *et al.* 2000; Neumann and Becher 2002; Trowler and Cooper 2002; Cox and Hassard 2005; Fleetwood

2005; Elton 2006; Brown 2009). Constructivism attests that human knowledge is constructed, that is, learners construct knowledge for themselves when they are educated (Bereiter 1994; Phillips 1995; Geelan 1997). Constructivism has received widespread attention in the field of higher education and there is an enormous list of publications on its ideological background (Solomon 1994; Phillips 1995; Geelan 1997). Constructivism has been so extensively researched and debated in the field of higher education that scientific papers have been written to explain its various forms and theoretical propositions (Solomon 1994; Phillips 1995; Geelan 1997). Solomon (1994) suggests that there exists no single ideological strand of constructivism that appears to be superior over another (Solomon 1994), while Phillips (1995) and Geelan (1997) give credence to Feyerabend (Feyerabend 1975) and his contention of the anarchic theory of scientific knowledge that states that there are no pre-determined rules or methods by which scientific knowledge progresses (Feyerabend 1975). In this ideological minefield it is clearly difficult to distinguish which is the most appropriate and readily applicable strand of constructivism in the field of higher education teaching. For example, certain authors like Entwistle (Entwistle 1987; Entwistle and Tait 1995; Entwistle *et al.* 2000; Entwistle and Entwistle 2003; Entwistle 2005) and Trigwell (Trigwell *et al.* 1999; Trigwell 2001; Trigwell and Prosser 2004; Trigwell and Shale 2004; Trigwell 2005; Trigwell *et al.* 2005a; Trigwell *et al.* 2005b; Trigwell and Ashwin 2006) have advanced an extensive body of work with detailed propositions and research tools such as the Approaches to Teaching Inventory (ATI) (Trigwell and Prosser 2004) or the Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students (ASSIST) (Tait *et al.* 1998) based on the constructivist approach to teaching and learning in higher education.

While scientific advances were taking place on what constitutes the best teacher-student environment that will bring about effective learning, another important aspect was beginning to emerge in the evolving literature on higher education: higher education governance. This aspect was of no less importance to the teacher-student relation because

it was the cornerstone where such a relation will take place. There are several models that have been prominent in the evolving literature on higher education institutional governance (Kezar and Eckel 2004). Some of the most influential models postulate that universities are best governed as bureaucratic systems, as collegial systems, as political systems, as open systems, as cybernetic systems or as organised anarchic systems (Birnbaum 1989; Kezar and Eckel 2004). The bureaucratic system is characterised by centralised, hierarchical administrative oversight, where quality is measured by the speed of decision making, not by the results (Kezar and Eckel 2004). The collegial model is characterised by informal decision-making, consensus-building community of peers, and a high degree of personal interaction (Kezar and Eckel 2004). The organised anarchy model (Cohen and March 1986) posits that in certain universities authority is so diffuse that it lessens the leader's ability to influence decision-making implementation. This model applies to organisations with problematic goals, unclear technologies and fluid participation (Kezar and Eckel 2004). The political model focuses not on the structural but on the human side of governance (Baldridge 1971) with people throughout the organisation considered central to the governance process. Influence and informal processes are critical to formation of policy and policy emerges from interest groups, conflict and values (Kezar and Eckel 2004). The open systems model is a matrix model that focuses attention on how broad economic, political and cultural forces affect university decision-making and its responsiveness to the environment (Kezar and Eckel 2004). This model incorporates the human and structural side of university governance (Clark 1998; Gumport and Snydman 2002). Another model is the cybernetic model of university governance (Birnbaum 1989) which is an integrative model of governance based on the laws of cybernetic systems originally advanced by R. Ashby (Ashby 1956). This model posits that university governance relies on layers and subunits that are highly complex. As proposed by Kezar and Eckel (Kezar and Eckel 2004) *"a major assertion in Birnbaum's work is that campus governance systems are not efficient but highly effective, suggesting that efficiency and*

effectiveness may be antithetical when applied to campus governance".

Scientific advances towards identifying 1) the best strategy that will lead to effective learning for undergraduate students and 2) the best model of higher education institutional governance that will create an environment of effective learning are taking place while higher education institutions throughout the world experience a phenomenal expansion (Mayhew *et al.* 2004; Schofer and Meyer 2005; Marginson 2006). This 'massification' (Trowler and Knight 1999, p. 179) of higher education and the emergent role of educational management are currently re-shaping the higher education landscape. The theoretical debate on the interwoven relationships between power and knowledge, or more accurately knowledge as power, resulting from the extremely influential theories of Foucault (Foucault 1980), who explored the relationships of power and knowledge, are concurrently conflated with 1) the phenomenal expansion of higher education at the end of the 20th century (Lockwood and Davies 1985; Stehr 1994; Barnett 2000b; Barnett 2000d; Salter and Tapper 2000), and 2) the governmental attempts to manage such an expansion and regulate its (higher education) provisions with the creation, for example, of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in UK (Salter and Tapper 2000; Hoecht 2006). The nature of the debate about higher education has inadvertently or deliberately changed thereby and no in-depth analysis of approaches to teaching, university governance or the influential scepticism of Foucault (1972; 1980) on knowledge, can alone do justice or provide means of explanation for the current forces involved in the creation, use and exploitation of knowledge in modern higher education. One wonders what Foucault would find to say if he was alive today!

The employment of managers to run higher education institution (managerialism) (Trowler and Knight 1999, p. 193; Deem and Brehony 2005; Hoecht 2006) and governmental policy directives are increasingly pressuring modern higher education institutions (Gokulsing 1997; Ball 2003; Ainley 2004; Goldspink 2007) and the management of knowledge through institutional and organisational structural approaches

enters the equation that defines knowledge in higher education. Under this point of view, studies on knowledge management and institutional structures may be more revealing in defining the parameters of the equation. For example, theoretical frameworks on organisational structure (Meyer 1977; McNay 1995; Weick 1995; Gumport 2000; Scott 2001; Gumport and Snydman 2002) can offer valuable perspectives in the analytical approaches about the modern status of higher education (Elton 2008).

Of particular importance and value here are the theoretical propositions of Weick (Weick 1976; Weick 1982; Orton and Weick 1990; Weick 1995; Weick and Quinn 1999) on the coherence and deterministic tightness of organisations. Weick established a very sound theoretical framework to counter-suggest that, instead of conceiving organisations as coupled through tight links as it was then thought, educational organisations are actually loosely-coupled (Weick 1976). Weick suggested that sections within organisations are often tied together loosely in the interest of self-determination, localised adaptation, sensing, and innovation (Weick 1976). Weick used the USA educational system as an example of what he defined as a loosely-coupled system and illustrated how such a system can be important for organisational function. A loosely-coupled system has the following characteristics: 1) absence of regulations 2) lack of coordinating activity or dampened coordination through system 3) end result convergence 4) tight networks with slow feedback times (Weick 1976). It is these characteristics that help organisations create local adaptations and solutions in their development, allow organisation members to develop self-determination, help organisations persist through rapid environmental fluctuations, increase the organisation's sensitivity to the fluctuating environment and explain why sub-division malfunction does not damage the entire organisation (Weick 1976). Therefore, understanding an organisation as a loosely-coupled system of members, structures and procedures may help better explain how organisations adapt to their environments and survive amidst uncertainties. However, the issue here is the degrees of loose coupling in relation to the terms of a minimal central core of activities and values. It is the necessity

for the expansion of this latter central core of activities and values that is at the heart of the new institutionalism (Crowson *et al.* 1996; March and Olsen 2005). Weick maintains that there are varying degrees of coupling within organisations, such as education institutions, and temporality and variability in these couplings makes them difficult to research and their loose nature makes them difficult to systematically change (Weick 1976). Weick proposed that the loosely-coupled elements of organisations have the following functions: a) May allow parts of the organisation to persist even after changes in the environment, b) May provide a better environmental sensing mechanism equivalent to sand as a better wind sensor than rocks, c) Efficient localised adaptation to the environment without changing the entire system, d) May allow more novel solutions and peculiarities to occur and be maintained than a tightly coupled system though it may also be a barrier for diffusion of good ideas, e) Create less damage when a part of the system breaks down but repair of a subsystem is more difficult, f) Make more room available for self determination by actors, g) The cost of coordination is held to a minimum (Weick 1976, p. 5-8). In essence, if an organisation is sequestered into largely self-functioning subsystems, like in educational systems, then loose coupling is really the 'glue' that holds them together.

The concept of loose coupling "*was grounded almost from the beginning in educational organisations, which are simultaneously unique, neglected, plentiful, and puzzling*" (Weick 1989, p. 14). The loose coupling concept "*gave educational organisations some distinctiveness and it did so by means of a deceptively simple bipolar notion that preserves, in one image, the opposition between autonomy (loose) and interdependence (coupling)*" (Weick 1989, p. 14). The concept of loose coupling was at times inappropriately used by organisational theorists (Weick 1989, p. 14) and in an attempt to re-frame it, Orton and Weick (1990) proposed that there are two facets in the opposition between autonomy (loose) and interdependence (coupling) within organisations. On the one hand, there is spatial opposition so some organisations are mechanistic (coupled) while others are organic (loose). On the other hand, there is temporal opposition so some organisations are

either loose in the beginning but become coupled as they grow larger and older, or they are both loose and tight all the time (Orton and Weick 1990).

This proposal of educational systems as loosely-coupled became a very powerful and influential theoretical framework in the study of educational management and organisation with more than 200 citations of the original paper of Weick (1976). Although, Orton and Weick (1990) called for a re-conceptualisation of the theory, as described above, and cautioned over the excessive interpretations and miss-interpretations in attempts to develop the concept, it has remained a very influential theoretical approach with multiple practical implications to organisation research to date.

The idea of loosely-coupled systems allows a deeper and broader theoretical perspective to emerge from the analysis of the knowledge-power relationships within academic environments. Foucault's expositions on the relationships between power and knowledge (Foucault 1980) can thus be re-synthesised and conceived under the framework provided by Weick and provide new insights on the role that higher education plays in knowledge creation and use.

For example, Clark (1983b) offers an interesting take on the role of higher education by proposing that instead of focusing on the people-processing functions of higher education, research should be focused on its knowledge-processing functions (Clark 1983b). Clark (1983b) argues that knowledge "*is the prime material in which activity is organised*" in universities and "*it is at the core of every higher education system's purpose and essence*" (Clark 1983b, p. 13). Clark (1983b) offers another interesting twist in the way knowledge is managed and legitimated within higher education institutions: "*As educational institutions in general evolve, they develop categories of knowledge and thereby determine that certain types of knowledge exist and are authoritative*" (Clark 1983b, p. 26). Clark (1983b) goes on to suggest that educational institutions "*also define categories of persons privileged to possess the bodies of knowledge and to exercise the authority that comes from knowledge. Educational structures, in effect, are a theory of knowledge, in that they*

help define what currently counts as knowledge" (Clark 1983b, p. 26).

In effect, Clark (1983) is saying that higher education institutions shape - by either restricting or expanding, legitimating or illegitimating - the content of knowledge. Let's follow this argument: by professing to know what knowledge is (becoming authoritative about it) higher education institutions reform (or just form) their curricula and offer it to their undergraduate students. It follows that undergraduate students will have no absolute conception of knowledge but their-own-university's-take-on-knowledge. What emancipatory power the theoretical frameworks of objectivism or constructivism will have, then, least they are absolutely grounded and restricted to the learning process of the undergraduate students? In Clark's argument (Clark 1983b) one can easily see a very close dialectical line between M. Foucault's contention that 'knowledge is power' (Foucault 1980) and the ability of higher education institutions to legitimate their activity by using their professed knowledge as power (Meyer 1977; Gibbons *et al.* 1994).

These advanced conceptual frameworks offered by organisation analysts occur at the same time as the massive expansion of higher education institutions took place and this increase in higher education institutions and student numbers (Trowler and Knight 1999), whether government-intended or government-allowed, brought with it the need for, at least, fiscal regulation. Different forms of government regulation exist in different countries (Palfreyman and Tapper 2009) and in UK, for example, such regulatory mechanisms of the higher education sector began and have gained increasing importance after the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 (Trowler and Knight 1999; Palfreyman and Tapper 2009) which legislated quality assessment arrangements. We move then into an era where management takes centre stage in higher education governance (Newman 1995; Deem 1998; Nixon 2001; Deem and Brehony 2005) and enterprises either run by individual academics or at the institutional level are welcomed and promoted (Barnett 2005; Mautner 2005; Deem 2006). And Foucault's contention that 'knowledge is power' gains a new momentum and impetus!

As shown above, relationships between power and knowledge are too complex in contemporary higher education to allow constructs of teaching within a university to be analysed solely at the level of teacher-student relation or at the level of university governance because such levels shed no light on what is going on today in the theory and practice of educational administration. Literature is abound with accounts on how extensive is the reliance on outcomes to judge the theory and practice of educational research and inquiry and to rank the effectiveness of modern academic organisations (Tight 2000; Taylor 2006a; Taylor and Braddock 2007). Performance becomes the measure by which theory and practice of educational research and inquiry is judged (Corson 1991; Elton 2001) and the sociology of academic organisations is understood within higher education institutions (Lave and Wegner 1991; Crowson *et al.* 1996; Mutch 2003). When outcomes, performance and league tables (Tight 2000; Dill and Soo 2005; Usher and Savino 2006; Macfarlane 2007), among other things, influence the way higher education institutions are viewed and perceived by its clientele, then a deeper, multi-faceted approach is required to analyse the constructs of teaching within a university. As demonstrated in an impressive metaphorical way by Gioia and Corley (Gioia and Corley 2002), a transformation by Circe (the enchantress in Homer's Odyssey) takes place when academic institutions enter the league tables 'race'. Soon, prospective students recognise the university's name as a brand name and the race to look good is on! Government-imposed subject benchmarks, institutional audits and discipline-specific auditing by professional agencies enter the equation and more levels of accountability have to be generated (Billing 1998; Newton 2000; Trigwell 2001; Newton 2002; Laughton 2003; Hoecht 2006; Knight 2006).

There are two elements of this chase for performance outcomes that are explicitly pertinent to my case study. These are 1) the impact of research activities on the quality of teaching within a university and 2) the impact of institutional audits on the management of an elite university's teaching arrangements.

Contemporary higher education institutions feel exceedingly pressured to expand their research capabilities and their research outcome in a global competition to attract not only students (clientele) but also high profile researchers. The wording is not derision; an exhaustive list of studies attests to that (Neumann 1992; Neumann 1993; Neumann 1994; Bassey 2001; Fairweather 2002; Taylor 2004; Barnett 2005; Taylor 2006b; Taylor 2006a; Robertson 2007; Taylor 2007; Taylor and Braddock 2007; Barnett 2009).

In UK, for example, in the last thirty years there has been the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), conducted by the Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFC), with rankings that determine the allocation of research funds each higher education institution receives, as well as the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) that determines and ranks the quality of teaching provisions within each higher education institution. One reaction of higher education institutions was to create business management style approaches and administrative units to cope with the increased accountability demands (Gokulsing 1997; Newton 2000; Newton 2002; Ball 2003; Newton 2003; Kolsaker 2008).

And it does not end there: Elton (Elton 2008) explores the origins of our modern conception of the university and persuasively proposes that the origins of the modern idea of the university can be traced in Humboldt's declaration in 1810 of the organisational framework of the University of Berlin (Humboldt 1970). Humboldt states that the modern university, unlike the school, should be in the service of academic scholarship in pursuit of knowledge as a line of enquiry, not yet formulated, tentative and open to enquiry (Humboldt 1970). Subsequently, research should be an integral part of academic life and a purposeful occupation of academic teachers in their pursuit of knowledge. Research then is needed, justified and actively encouraged. What follows is that 200 years later academic research is a major part of academic institutions and it is subject to assessment (RAE, for example) and inextricably linked to funding of higher education institutions by the state. Elton suggests that universities are currently at a cross road and states: "*Either staff loyalty*

to their institutions will derive from top down management practice, with the vice-chancellor as a university's chief executive, or institutional management reverts to its collegial forms, with the vice-chancellor as a university's first servant... the main objective should then not be the equal importance of disciplinary and institutional loyalties, but the equal importance of research and teaching in universities" (Elton 2008, p.233-234). In other words, universities do not only have to manage their teaching provisions, they also have to place an increasingly greater emphasis on the management of their research outputs (Kolsaker 2008).

The issue is, then, do research activities in higher education institutions impact on the quality of teaching? Does research effect teaching in any way? An exhaustive list of studies has addressed this contentious issue (Neumann 1992; Hattie and Marsh 1996; Coate *et al.* 2001; Marsh and Hattie 2002; Robertson and Bond 2005; Taylor 2007) and it has been an issue that consumed a great deal of attention among educational theorists. The topic is divisive: those suggesting that quality of teaching is negatively affected by the research activities of the teaching staff argue that teaching takes second stage as a professional activity of research-active academic staff (Neumann 1992) and it is, indeed, an inevitable reality of the expansion of higher education in recent years when research activities and administrative responsibilities consume an increasing amount of the time of academic staff (Ramsden and Moses 1992). Proponents of this argument enlist pragmatic considerations to investigate the research-teaching nexus arguing for the lack of time, nature of occupation (solitary research vs. social interaction in teaching) and tangible and intangible rewards that result from each activity.

Hattie and Marsh (1996) in their seminal paper (Hattie and Marsh 1996) propose that there are three major arguments as to why the relationship between teaching and research should be negative (i.e. research activities should have a negative impact on the quality of teaching). These are a) the scarcity model, b) the differential personality model and c) the divergent rewards model. The scarcity model is based on pragmatic terms and suggests

that teaching will be negatively affected when an academic is actively involved in research because of time limitations. Consequently, an academic will delegate teaching activities to other members of teaching staff or use his research activities as an argument for absences (Hattie and Marsh 1996). The differential personality model suggests that there is a negative relationship because teaching and research as activities require contrary personality orientations that are in intangible terms contradictory. For example, doing research often involves manual solitary work and the same is true in writing papers or research grants. Teaching is by its nature a social interaction process, carried out in the presence of others. The divergent rewards model proposes that teaching and research are conflicting roles that are motivated by differential reward systems. Hattie and Marsh (1996) could not identify any negative relationships between the two activities under this model and suggested that for both of these activities motivation may be influenced by intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards (Hattie and Marsh 1996). However, others (cited in Hattie and Marsh 1996) have found that when it came to salary considerations and academic rewards, research was far more influencing the rewards the academics gained (Hattie and Marsh 1996).

Hattie and Marsh (1996) propose that there are two major arguments as to why the relationship between teaching and research should be positive (i.e. research activities should have a positive impact on the quality of teaching). These are a) the conventional wisdom model and b) the 'G' model. The conventional wisdom model suggests that research positively influences the quality of teaching because it creates a mutually enriching interaction between the two. For example, (Neumann 1992) found that the teaching-research nexus operates at three levels: "*the tangible connection relating to the transmission of advanced knowledge, the intangible connection relating to the development in students of an approach and attitudes towards knowledge and a stimulating and rejuvenating milieu for academics, and the global connection relating to the interaction between teaching and research at the departmental as well as the*

individual level" (Neumann 1992 quoted by Hattie and Marsh 1996, p. 511; Hattie and Marsh 1996, p. 511). Under the 'G' model it is proposed that the positive relationship lies in the fact that the abilities and values (such as creativity, critical analysis and dedication) underlying both activities are similar.

Hattie and Marsh (1996) propose that there are three major arguments as to why the relationship between teaching and research should not exist (i.e. research activities should have no impact on the quality of teaching). These are a) the differential enterprise model, b) the unrelated personality model and c) the bureaucratic funding model. Under the differential enterprise model it is suggested that there is no relationship between teaching and research because these are two different activities. Proponents of this model (Barnett 1992) suggest that these are two fundamentally different occupations requiring different qualities from those who involve in them. This conceptual understanding, however, seems counterintuitive and unrealistic in today's higher education institutions that are vying for research expansion where academics are required to juggle between research and teaching activities (Scott 1991; Robertson 2007). The unrelated personality model (b) proposes the relatively unexplored notion that a teacher and researcher are two incompatible personalities and having personality constructs that are largely mutually exclusive. The bureaucratic funding model is more of an advocacy plea than a model (Hattie and Marsh 1996) calling for the uncoupling of research and teaching at the financial and institutional level. This model proposes that such a move will free curricula from the tensions of research interests especially in specialised institutions.

Hattie and Marsh (1996) also propose two more models that have mediating variables (Hattie and Marsh 1996). These are a) Marsh's Compensatory Model and b) Friedrich and Michalak's Intervening Variables Model. Marsh's Compensatory Model was proposed to show that despite the presence of an extensive range of variables, the abilities to be effective at teaching and research are positively correlated (Hattie and Marsh 1996). Friedrich and Michalak's Intervening Variables Model was proposed following research

(Hattie and Marsh 1996) which showed that despite the presence of intervening variables there is a zero relationship between teaching and research.

These authors (Hattie and Marsh 1996) took these models into consideration and conducted correlation meta-analysis of published research data on the relationships between research and teaching. Their findings are staggering: They could not find any relationship between research and teaching. The relationship between research and teaching was neither negative nor positive, it was simply zero (Hattie and Marsh 1996).

They repeated a similar correlation meta-analysis of published research data on the relationships between research productivity and teaching effectiveness of individual academics (Marsh and Hattie 2002). They find that there is also zero relationship between research productivity and teaching effectiveness and conclude that: "*It is important not to perpetuate the myth that there is a positive and reciprocal relation between teaching and research. There is no doubt that many would like such a positive relation to be true, and there is a strong conviction that research and teaching are closely linked*" (Marsh and Hattie 2002, p. 631).

In conclusion, these research findings show that one cannot blame (or praise for that matter) the research activities of academic institutions for the quality of their teaching. The research activities of universities serve purposes other than the advancement of their quality of teaching, so when academic staff individualistically pursue performance-driven research initiatives that will not necessarily feed into their qualities as teachers.

Meanwhile, it hardly takes one look at the media coverage of higher education affairs (Times Higher Education Supplement for example) for one to understand how university governance has changed dramatically in the last three decades and this change is evident not only in Europe or USA but throughout the world. In their seminal paper, Salter and Tapper (2000) give a very detailed account of these events. The rapid expansion of higher education meant it is now exposed to governmental regulations, the free-market economy

and the needs for management and accountability. The universities find themselves having to deliver against government targets that employ resource allocation decisions and external audit (Salter and Tapper 2000). The power relationships have changed and as Salter and Tapper (2000, p. 79) point out "*with a comprehensive bureaucracy of state control, politicians and state bureaucrats were abrasively assertive. Academics, on the other hand, both individually and collectively were on the back foot, having to react to the state's insistent prodding.*" What was initially a directive and prescriptive regime with relatively benign requirements to document course content and definitions of teaching and learning outcomes soon became, through the QAA audits, the formalisation of student feedback and the Research Assessment Exercise, a fully blown accountability exercise.

Essentially, academics on the whole now function within performative systems of accountability embedded in managerialism (Hoecht 2006; Kolsaker 2008). Academics are faced with an ever increasingly structured and monitored system of operations. Olssen (Olssen 2002) gives a contrasting description of the managerial versus the traditional modes of university governance (see Kolsaker 2008, p. 514). Macfarlane (2005) proposes that the significance of managerialism in higher education lies in the erosion of the balancing role played by the collegial spirit of university environments and suggests that such erosion in the collegial spirit allows managers to promote the significance of their role and highlight the special contribution of management, and thereby justify their power (Macfarlane 2005, p. 302). As described by Kolsaker (2008) "*managerialism represents a distinctive discourse based upon a set of values that justify the assumed right of one group to monitor and control the activities of others*" (Kolsaker 2008, p. 515).

However, it is not the case that managerialism has replaced the collegial spirit in universities. Hybrid managerial models are conflated with the collegial spirit of universities and can produce inefficient executive and committee systems (Braun 1999). Braun (1999) observes that coordination and decision-making structures may be established on top of existing ones resulting in multilayered and complex decision-making

structures that are inefficient and badly coordinated (Braun 1999). As suggested by Olssen (Olssen 2002) what can be observed is a power struggle between the management forces wanting to assert their legitimate rights over the traditional collegiality of universities that refuses to relinquish its freedom. Foucault (Foucault 1980) suggests that there can be no gain or loss of power by one side to the other, but instead power relations are realigned and reconstituted. Managerialism changes the nature of relations between professionals and managers, necessitating some self-reflection and change (Nixon 2001). According to Foucault "*identities are reconstituted by two mechanisms: 'technologies of power' and 'practices of self'. Technologies of power which are external to self exert pressure from the outside, while practices of self are operated by the individuals who have the agency to utilize strategies of power to manage and affect their constitution as subjects through a recognition of the possible subject positions available*" (Foucault 1982, p. 208). 'Identities' are accomplished through practices which permit individuals to attain a 'certain mode of being' (Kolsaker 2008). These practices are not simple reactions to changing conditions but, in effect, strategies of power that contribute as well as respond to managerialist discourses (Kolsaker 2008). Relations of power simply cannot exist without liberty on both sides such that within all power relations there is at least the possibility of resistance (Foucault 1991). However, although academics can potentially resist, there has been little resistance to the radical changes that have swept across the universities in the last three decades.

If we follow Foucault's argument that little resistance implies tacit approval (Foucault 1991), then (managerial) power can only be exercised if the recipient (academics) acknowledges the legitimacy of the source. In other words, the academic community, by offering little resistance through its actions, tacitly supports the decision makers and the social, political and regulatory structures that support their (managerial) position. As suggested (Kolsaker 2008), in Foucault terms, academics almost certainly recognise and acknowledge that their relative autonomy is politically and socially constructed, accepting

managerialism as a facilitator force (Kolsaker 2008, p. 518). Therefore, "*both 'technologies of power' and 'practices of self' come into play to maintain professional identity, bringing into focus the finely balanced nature and the level of complexity inherent in power relations between academics, academic-managers, universities and the state*" (Kolsaker 2008, p. 518). The individual academics consciously determine to play along, understanding that managerialism is simply a form of governance which goes alongside and is inextricably meshed with governance of the self, and in Foucault's terms the individual plays a proactive role in sustaining prevailing discourses (Kolsaker 2008).

What complicates matters even further is the recent creation of manager-academics, i.e. academics who take on the job of managers of academic structures and manage both other academics and staff (Deem and Brehony 2005). By extensively elaborating on the various facets of interdependency and dynamic relations between managers and academics in modern higher education institutions, Deem and Brehony (2005) suggest that reforms to the management of public services such as education can be regarded as part of a general ideology allied to 'new managerialism' rather than a new technocratic administrative orthodoxy that is unconnected to relations of power and domination (Deem and Brehony 2005, p. 231). Deem and Brehony (2005) go on to speculate that managerialism as a general set of ideological principles has permeated higher education and also that many manager-academics have embraced these principles and the associated language and thus distorted their role as academics by managing both other academics and staff (Deem and Brehony 2005). Manager-academics act as a social group very interested in maintaining relationships of power and domination and their role is 'sponsored' by outside agencies concerned with quality audit and assessment of research and teaching which further legitimate the right of university managers to manage (Deem and Brehony 2005).

1.4 Synthesis

Let's summarise what has been presented so far, bearing in mind the overarching assumption that good teaching brings about good learning that leads to the attainment of knowledge:

- It was proposed that according to Habermas there are three kinds of knowledge: instrumental, moral-practical and emancipatory knowledge (Habermas 1971), and through the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (Mezirow 1990; Mezirow 1991) they lead to three kinds of learning: instrumental, communicative and emancipatory (Mezirow 1990; Mezirow 1991).
- It was proposed that the notion of 'performative knowledge' (Lyotard 1984) is at the heart of the current debates on the status and the future of higher education. This notion has been eloquently elaborated by Barnett (Barnett 2000b; Barnett 2000d; Barnett 2000c; Barnett *et al.* 2001; Barnett 2004a; Barnett 2004b; Barnett 2009) who suggests that the notion of *being* (Barnett 2009) should be central to all debates about the character and the future of higher education.
- It was proposed that educational structures are effectively a theory of knowledge in that they define what counts as knowledge (Clark 1983b), thereby gaining legitimacy and power (Foucault 1980). Analysing the structure of academic institutions using conceptual frameworks offered by organisational theorists (Weick 1976; Weick 1995; Scott 2001) can provide a rich insight on what counts as knowledge and, following the overarching assumption in reverse, how good teaching is constructed.
- It was proposed that there is no actual link between research output and teaching and despite the extensive literature on this issue the relationship has been found again (Hattie and Marsh 1996) and again (Marsh and Hattie 2002) to be zero. This means that there can be no domino effect on the quality of teaching by the quality of research carried out within universities.
- It was proposed that managerialism as a culture and as a government initiative takes

increasingly centre stage in the governance of higher educational institutions (Kolsaker 2008) and gradually erodes the collegial structure of academic departments and faculties. Such power struggles, viewed under the theoretical framework of the power/knowledge relationships advanced by Foucault (Foucault 1980; Foucault 1991), re-align the conditions of co-existence between managers and academics and, most importantly, under the watchful eye of media coverage (Usher and Savino 2006) coercively promote the view that positivism and performance (Deem and Brehony 2005) are the safe way forward.

1.5 Frameworks

Thus far, I have tried to remain open-minded and investigate every possible scientific approach that could best help me shape and create a theoretical framework. I have looked at levels of micro, meso and macro-analysis as presented in literature and strived to pitch the nature of my research as much as I could within theories and scientific propositions. I have concluded that my theoretical framework can best be 'framed' within the fuzzy boundaries created by the following theories on teaching and organisation of higher education institutions. With all these in mind, I consider as pillars of my theoretical analytical framework to be:

1) The organisational analytical framework on system coupling in organisational structures offered by K. Weick

2) The institutional analytical framework on change within higher education institutions and knowledge creation and use by higher education institutions provided by B. Clark

3) The visionary epistemological analytical propositions of R. Barnett on 'performative knowledge' and the future of higher education

I will next explain and analyse these theoretical frameworks *stressing the fact that they do not present themselves as theoretical scaffolds or conceptualisation domains but rather they are questions-posing theoretical lines of demarcation of my research*. By this I mean

that these theoretical frameworks by framing my research breadth they pose research questions and open research avenues that my research findings need to follow.

1.5.1 Loose coupling

The organisation theory of K. Weick and especially the notion of coupled systems he proposed (Weick 1976; Weick 1982; Weick 1995) became the point of reference for a great deal of research and debate on what is the nature and ramifications of the 'loosely-coupled systems'. Higher education institutions by being loosely-coupled exhibit unpredictable responses to major changes trying to balance between stability and flexibility (Weick 1976; Weick 1982; Boyce 2003). Higher education institutions experience difficulty in adjusting, negotiating and diffusing a major change through their institutional structure but they can accommodate small adjustments easily and have highly accurate environmental sensing 'devices' in place. There are two immediately formulated questions to be answered by this theoretical proposition:

1) Where in the spectrum of loosely-coupled educational systems lies the subject of my research? 2) What are its environment sensing 'devices'? Do they operate well in the current climate of constant change in higher education policy and practice?

By Weick's suggestion that organisational change should be "*centralized when subunits' adjustments can have discontinuous, long-term effects at considerable expense and decentralized when adjustments have continuous, abbreviated, inexpensive effects*" (Weick 1982, p. 390), the immediate question to be asked is: How is the subject of my research responding to change at the level of the organisation as a whole?

Given that there is a trade-off between stability and flexibility in the adaptation to maximise current opportunities and adaptability to future opportunities (Boyce 2003), one should look at change within the university from the vantage point of organisational response.

1.5.2 Institutional change

The institutional analytical framework offered by B. R. Clark with its focus on change within education institutions (Clark 1983a) and the use of knowledge as power by the institutions (Clark 1987) is another framework that pertains to the subject of my research. Clark proposed that the "*fundamental adaptive mechanism of universities is the capacity to add and subtract some fields of knowledge and related units without disturbing all of the others*" (Clark 1983a, p. 104). I understand this as a description of higher education institutions as a loosely-coupled system (Weick 1976, p. 15, line 24) that Clark adopts, but views it with an institutional perspective. Universities, by being a matrix of academic disciplines and institutional enterprise, resort to several kinds of change: grassroots innovation, innovation by persuasion, incremental change, boundary-leaking change, and invisible change (Clark 1984). These fundamental propositions are skilfully elaborated by M. E. Boyce in her presentation of first order and second order changes within universities (Boyce 2003). Boyce describes first order changes as structural and procedural that apply what is already known, detect and correct errors or mismatches in performance. Such examples of first order changes are *"adding, eliminating, and revising courses, programs, departments, services, and schools or modifying strategies, altering procedures and practices, and combining or separating processes or entities"* (Boyce 2003, p. 106). The aim of such changes is to improve and enhance institutional efficiency and effectiveness when organisational inquiry detects a mismatch between desired performance and results.

A variation to the above happens when there appear questions about the underlying assumption(s) of a required (or requested such as in the case of UK's QAA) change with the aim to enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Boyce 2003). When such questions arise about how and why efficiency and effectiveness are defined and understood in particular ways within the institution, when outcome measures are identified differently, and when changes occur in organisational outcomes, then, incremental and developmental first order changes still take place but in a mutually contrived way (Boyce 2003).

However, there are also second-order changes (Clark 1998; Clark 2000; Boyce 2003) that involve changing the theory of action or underlying assumptions and values of an organisation and thereby these changes are transformational and irreversible (Clark 1998; Clark 2000; Boyce 2003). When these changes eventually become visible in the institution they present themselves as changes in mission, vision, culture, structures, processes, performance, and behaviour (Boyce 2003). Studying entrepreneurism and university transformation in Europe (Clark 1998; Clark 2000), Clark provides examples of such second order changes which include a strengthened steering core, an expanded developmental periphery, a diversified funding base, a stimulated academic heartland, and an integrated entrepreneurial culture (Clark 2000, p. 5). His analysis identified that "*transformation occurs when a number of individuals come together in university basic units and across a university over a number of years to change, by means of organized initiative, how the institution is structured and oriented*" (Clark 2000, p. 4) and this leads to deep and fundamental changes in the institution. This institutional analytical framework poses a very important question that pertain to my research: How is change perceived and mediated by the academics involved in managing and implementing the teaching policy and practice of the various university departments?

Clark also advanced our current understanding as to how scientific knowledge, with all its connotations and representations, generated within a given university is used by the institution as a source of power (Clark 1983b; Gumport 2000; Gumport and Snydman 2002). His line of thinking on this concept is intrinsically linked with the nature of change(s) that is described above (Boyce 2003). For example, Clark states that changes in the scientific knowledge "*have important long-run effects, e.g., the great incremental build-up of knowledge in first the physical sciences and then the biological sciences in the twentieth century, accompanied by increasing dominance of these fields in resources and power within universities.*" (Clark 1983a, p. 114) In other words, research-driven accumulation and dissemination of scientific knowledge builds up a strong academic base

and strengthens the human capital of a university giving it a competitive edge in revenue-oriented marketing of knowledge and recruitment of students (Clark 1983b; Clark 1983a; Gibbons *et al.* 1994; Gumport 2000; Gumport and Snydman 2002). This analysis means that I have to bear in mind during my research that the relationships between power and knowledge and the effects of these two on human capital and resources is a non-contingent issue but rather pervasive as cultural outlook given that the subject of my research is an elite, research-intensive university.

1.5.3 Performativity

The need to have an epistemological framework for my research project stems from the absolute requirement to engage with the nature, identity and future of higher education in the present day. In a sense, this is a pragmatic framework; I have to look at the reality of higher education and focus on issues that pertain to the present character of the subject of my research. The extensive theoretical propositions of R. Barnett on the nature and future of higher education provide such a framework (Barnett 1993; Barnett 1999; Barnett 2000c; Barnett 2000b; Barnett 2000d; Barnett 2000a; Barnett *et al.* 2001; Coate *et al.* 2001; Barnett 2004a; Barnett 2004b; Barnett *et al.* 2004; Barnett 2005; Barnett 2009). There are 4 inter-related topics that are extensively discussed in Barnett's writings: These are the notions of 'performativity' and 'performative knowledge', the existence and prosperity of higher education institutions in an 'age of supercomplexity', the presence of 3 modes of knowledge that exist within universities and the concept of entreprenurialism that defines and, indeed, identifies present day universities. Despite the fact that Barnett discusses these 4 topics in different publications, they do not present themselves as separate and separable entities but rather, they are engrained within Barnett's body of work and are highly related with each other. For example, the concept of entrepreneurialism is strongly connected with the notion of 'performativity' and defines the boundaries of existence of higher education

institutions. To ignore such a framework of thought will be like investigating an object without understanding its purpose of being.

As explained by Usher (2006), Lyotard in proposing the notion of 'performativity' argued that with 'performativity' the role of knowledge becomes that of contributing to the best efficiency and effectiveness of a system, whatever the nature of that system may be, and the worthwhileness or value of the knowledge is evaluated on that basis (Usher 2006, p. 281). Performativity is seen as *"compressing the space to do research, with a decline of traditional research cultures, and a corresponding demand for ''relevance'', immediate pay offs and a direct instrumental contribution to systemic efficiency and national productivity"* (Stronach and MacLure 1997; Usher 2006, p. 281). According to Usher *"performativity implies and indeed requires performance for its realization. The performativity of knowledge production is demonstrated or enacted through performance and the performance is itself enabled by performativity"* (2006, p. 286). Such a close relation between performance and 'performativity' makes higher education institutions act as producers and sellers of the knowledge they generate and any endowment on this knowledge is, in turn, used and communicated as a sign of the position they have to have in 'league tables' or ranks of 'excellence' (Usher 2006). This communication reaches its audience, among them the prospective students, and generates an increasing demand with more and more students asking for entrance into high-performing universities.

Barnett (Barnett 2000b) proposes that the new forms of knowledge that the universities have to provide are 'performative knowledges' that are provided so that individuals can come into relationship with and in the world. This notion of 'performative knowledge' appears to be embedded within the post-modern, research-oriented universities which place an increasing emphasis on the use-value knowledge rather than knowledge for its own sake (Barnett *et al.* 2001). Despite the fact that the 'performative shift' (Barnett *et al.* 2001) towards increasing emphasis on efficiency, outputs and use-value is, evidently, played out differently across the subject areas, there is clearly a trend for academic knowledge to

address the question *"what use is it for?"* rather than *"is it true?"*. This change in the critical stance on academic knowledge comes from increasing pressures to universities to provide and cater for an increasing array of demands from governmental organisations, quality control institutions and commercial enterprises interested in the services that higher education can provide (Barnett 1999) and can be readily observed, for example, in the description of subject benchmarks by quality control institutions such as the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK. Barnett asks whether we have come to the 'end of knowledge' in higher education in an age of supercomplexity, when higher education is faced with colliding and contrasting frameworks of knowledge that have ever-increasing and fuzzy boundaries (Barnett 2000d) and the 'end of knowledge' is identified in the following forms:

- Substantive, the knowledge sustained by the university has no particular status: it simply takes its place within the knowledges that society has now to offer.
- Ideological, the knowledge for which the university stands lacks legitimacy: it can be understood as a set of language games of an occupational group that reflect their interest and marginal standing to the rest of society.
- Procedural, the university can secure its future by marketing its knowledge as academic capitalism thereby creating 'performative knowledge' (Barnett 2000d).

Changes in higher education are re-shaping not only the fuzzy boundaries of the knowledge frameworks within the higher education institutions but also impact upon the effective learning outcomes of the university students (Barnett 2004a; Barnett 2004b) who are just adjusting their learning performance by adapting and coping with an increasingly uncertain, hostile and unknown future. Their learning styles, the knowledge they seek and the goals they set to achieve are all in response to their living in a complex environment that they find difficult to understand (Barnett 2004a). Taking this exact argument further and drawing upon philosophical descriptions on concepts of epistemologies, Barnett (Barnett 2000d; Barnett 2004a) describes three modes of knowledge:

- Mode 1 Knowledge: The systematic corpuses of knowledge contained within particular disciplines that have characteristic claims to knowledge set out in journals that are subject to systematic peer scrutiny (Barnett 2000d)
- Mode 2 Knowledge: The knowledge-based work that is a matter of knowledge-in-use, rather than a matter of knowledge applied to practical situations. This knowledge is not knowledge applied to practice but is knowledge derived in and through practice
- Mode 3 Knowledge: The knowing-in-and-with-uncertainty where every knowing results in further uncertainty and produces further epistemological gaps

...and argues that university undergraduates use Mode 1 knowledge and increasingly embrace Mode 2 Knowledge (Gibbons *et al.* 1994), but it is Mode 3 Knowledge that should be of real value to them (Barnett 2004a). Barnett's theoretical proposition becomes credible by research that shows that among university students there is an increasing emphasis on performance rather than learning and 'performative knowledge' is a major determinant even for those at the receiving end of education in higher education institutions (Cassidy and Eachus 2000).

In large research-oriented universities where there is strong emphasis and financial investment on research conducted within a university (Coate *et al.* 2001), a culture of entrepreneurialism (Barnett 2005) is currently developing that is backed by prioritisation and competing demands for research output and research performance taking precedence over attempts to improve teaching (Drennan 2001; Ball 2003; Durning 2004; Durning and Jenkins 2005; Taylor 2006a). Barnett (Barnett 2005) identified four forms of entrepreneurialism in universities:

- Civil entrepreneurialism where a university is keen to develop and promote itself in a relatively free market
- Hesitant entrepreneurialism where a university is keen to promote itself but where institutions are steered in the direction of an understanding of higher education as a public good

- Unbridled entrepreneurialism where a university understands itself to be a major source of exploitable knowledge capital in the wider 'knowledge economy'
- Curtailed entrepreneurialism where a university is willing to adopt the unbridled entrepreneurialism in an environment in which the state is managing the market (Barnett 2005).

If universities use the knowledge they generate (Clark 1983a) and, despite the lack or presence of corporate ideology behind higher education institutions (Yorke 2004), entrepreneurialism does exist and prosper in present-day universities, then the epistemological analytical framework, that I described above, imposes a substantial question I feel I am called to answer: Where is the subject of my research heading for? What will it look like in, for example, 50 years from now?

Chapter 2: Methods & Materials

2.1 Research question(s)

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of my research is to find '*what constructs of teaching are to be found in one of the best universities*'?

After identifying the constructs, I will have to critically examine and codify the implications they have in the management and organisation of teaching within this elite university. The context of analysis will be the contemporary university and therefore my analysis will not dwell on the historical perspective of these constructs.

A set of subsequent research questions, that result from trying to answer my first research question in the context of a case study, are imposed by the three layers of theoretical frameworks that has been presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 1). These questions explore the axial relations between institutional agency and human agency against four different contexts: management, change, complexity and evolution. As such, these questions can be seen as four sets of dual questions:

First set of questions:
- How does this elite university manage its constructs of teaching?

- What are the academics' views of these constructs and their management?

Second set of questions:
- How does this elite university, as an academic organisation, generate and/or respond to change in the higher education environment?

- How is change perceived and reacted upon by its academics?

Third set of questions:
- How does this elite university, as an academic organisation, sense and respond to the complexity of its contemporary environment?

- How is complexity perceived and reacted upon by its academics?

Fourth set of questions:

- How will this elite university evolve in the future?
- How is organisational evolution perceived by its academics?

Rather than being direct questions that my research will have to answer, these questions are emergent themes that will be highlighted by the analysis of the axial relations between institutional agency and human agency through my research. Therefore, in answering these 'questions', I will not follow a direct analytical route of question to research to results to answer, but rather the answers will be emergent and conflated while exploring the various contexts of: management, change, complexity and evolution.

2.2 Research methods

2.2.1 Overview

In this section I present and explain the methods that I used to answer my research question (see section 2.1) and I present the process of conducting my research and the materials that eventually became available to me for my research.

I start by giving an overview of issues pertinent to the case study method and the methodological background of this approach.

Next (Section 2.2.2), I present the ethical issues that are relevant to my research and I explain why I chose to use full anonymity of my research subject and alter the places and names of those that participated in my research. Then (Section 2.2.3), I provide information on the methodological steps I took to approach the subject of my research. I present a brief outline of the organisational structure of the university and give the reasons why I chose to focus on certain aspects of its institutional character and not in others.

In the subsequent section (Section 2.2.4), I present the research tool that I have used in my case study and I provide information on other relevant documentation and materials that I used for my research. Then (Section 2.2.5), I present a chronological account of how I conducted my research and what evidence I managed to gather.

In the following section (Section 2.2.6), I present the methodological approach I took in analysing my research findings and I present theoretical issues that are pertinent to my findings.

There are several approaches that can be used in qualitative research (Silverman 1997; Silverman 2000; Denzin 2005; Creswell 2007). Creswell (2007) describes five main approaches to qualitative research: Narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study.

I wanted my research to have a systematic way of looking at structures, analysing processes, justifying existence (being), understanding purposes, critically examining reality and finally reporting the results of all these. I am presenting approaches (i.e. constructs) used by a stratified sample of academics within an elite university to deliver its teaching provisions to its students. Constructs are by their own nature a vehicle: fallible, imperfect but most importantly dynamic; prone to becoming obsolete or to transform. Teaching is also a dynamic process influenced by myriads of social interactions and constantly adjusting. The notion of an elite university is also dynamic because it is not an established identity that will be identified as such to infinity. It is something that we refer to today - whether we agree to it or not is a different matter - but we may not refer to it in the future. Therefore, I have chosen to use the case study approach (Bassey 1999; Goom 2000; Yin 2003) because I want to do an in-depth investigation of a single entity (a case) for which I did not have a prior idea about the range of variables it might present me (Yin 2003). It is a representation of the here and today that may not hold true for tomorrow. If one adds to this the geographical and social constraints either imposed by the new capitalism, the managerialism foray in higher education institutions, and the uncertainty in higher education institutions, then our ability to call it representative of a wider set of elite institutions loses its validity. Therefore, I use the case study as a research strategy to investigate an entity in its real-life and contemporary context. It is not so particularly

important for me to find why this higher education institution is as it is. Rather, I want the scientific contribution of my research to be on how the case (the university) responds to its contemporary environment and how will the case respond to its environment in the future. In this way generating and putting forward hypotheses (Yin 2003) is, for me, a far more interesting aspect of my research. I am relying on multiple sources of evidence and I use as frameworks the theoretical propositions described in section 1.5 (Chapter 1).

Silverman (Silverman 2000, p. 3) describes five different *methods* of qualitative research that I understand to be methodological approaches (i.e. sources of evidence) rather than systematic epistemological approaches. These are: social survey, experiment, official statistics, structured observation and content analysis (Silverman 2000, p. 3).

Among these approaches, I can identify three that are very useful for my research. These are:

1) Official statistics. These will be official publicly and access-restricted documents published by the university or other agencies on its teaching provisions and policies. Any statistical data presented in those documents (see Table 2 and Appendix #3-5) were used without any further statistical analysis by me.

2) Structured observation. Following the definition of Silverman (2000, p. 3) on the structured observation approach, I did not undertake a structured observation approach *per se* but rather attended lectures offered as part of courses of University A and sessions organised by the university's human resources division about staff development initiatives.

3) Content analysis. This is the information analysis tool that I will use after collecting all the 'official statistics' and the 'structured observations'.

I use semi-structured interviews as one research tool where a set of open questions will be asked to each of the respondents and the conversation will be recorded and then transcribed and analysed to identify emerging patterns of responses between my respondents. This material together with documentation, archival records, physical

artefacts and participant observations (Yin 2003, p. 86), will become my structured observations that will then be used for my content analysis.

One of the ethical issues relevant to case study research is that of detachment of the researcher from the case (Silverman 1997; Silverman 2000; Hatch and Schultz 2002; Yin 2003). Although I cannot claim practical detachment from the case while I was conducting my research, I had no sympathy or empathy for the case, and at the time of writing of my thesis I was far removed from the case. I therefore consider myself as an *"outsider"* and I am not interested in improving the educational practices of the case. Those individuals that agreed to be interviewed by me did not do so on the basis that they knew me beforehand. They were informed about the content and purpose of my research and were given the opportunity to refuse to participate (Anonymous 2004).

Another pertinent issue is that of generalisation. The argument on generalisation of educational research can be viewed in two ways: Either generalisation is necessary if one has to propose wider concepts arising from the research data, or generalisation is to be avoided unless it is backed by solid, scientific data. In my case and given the nature of the research approach - a case study - I believe that generalisations are not appropriate and will almost be impossible to put forward. There exist, however, the concept of fuzzy generalisations (Bassey 1999; Bassey 2001; Hammersley 2001) alongside the statistical generalisations. Bassey (2001) argues that the concept of fuzzy generalisations can be used in research in social sciences in a probabilistic form and should lead to fuzzy predictions (Bassey 2001) defined as what will probably happen in the future if a given route, method or policy is adopted. However, Hammersley (2001) questions how rightfully one can reach fuzzy predictions in educational research by putting forward suggestions on what *will* probably happen (fuzzy predictions) under certain conditions (Pratt 2003). This concept of fuzzy predictions, despite its criticism (Pratt 2003), might be useful to my research project given the dynamic relations and the context of the theoretical frameworks I described in

section 1.5. I think that a good scientific contribution of my thesis would be putting forward fuzzy predictions about the evolution of the subject of my case study.

To summarise, I chose to do a case study research because I was interested in one particular entity: an elite university located in a particular geographical region, having well-documented history as an institution and a practically possible way of gathering information about it.

My intention is to gather information about and critically examine the constructs the university uses in its teaching provisions and evaluate how these constructs contribute to its maintenance at an elite status. I am trying to identify how the practice of teaching reinforces the elite status and establish the link (if there is one!) between the best practice and the elite status. By investigating the latter, I am not trying to create fuzzy generalisations (Bassey 1999; Bassey 2001; Hammersley 2001) on best teaching practices or establish a corollary between elite status and teaching practice. Rather, I am trying to define what elite status allows one to do or have (or not do and not have!). I am also trying to predict future directions: where this dynamic relation between elite status and teaching is heading within this particular entity, the elite university.

2.2.2 Ethical issues

The topic of my research involves collecting and analysing interview transcripts as well as publicly available and access-restricted documents, text and statements. I have two major advantages when it comes to the ethical issues of this research. I am not a citizen of the country in which this elite university exists. Therefore, I am not bound, prejudiced or in any way influenced by any historical, social or political context that may apply for this elite university. I have not been educated in this elite university or any rival elite university and therefore I am in a position to describe without judging, to identify defects without proposing remedies and to highlight distinctions without glamorising them.

Given the potentially damaging (or at times glorifying!) content of the documents I have accumulated, it is imperative that the name of the university, and all other related information, be carefully edited and excluded from my thesis. I have no intention to denigrate the university or to even being thought of attempting to denigrate it. I have reached the decision to conceal the geographical location of the university at which I conducted my case study, and to deliberately edit all references to it either at the level of the country or the region. Names will not just have to be changed but at times omitted. Technical terms, titles and special words that could potentially reveal the name of the university are edited. The representation I will use whenever I need to conceal something will be [edited: (*new name*)]. Whenever the university will have to be named it will be termed University A.

I also need to declare that I conducted this research without being an "*insider*" within the university. I never took part in teaching within the university and never interfered or intervened in the way teaching was organised and conducted because I did not have any professional concerns about it. I also need to declare that I have no financial interest in exploiting the findings of this research.

All participants in my research and all the people that provided me with information did so after being fully informed of who I am, why I carry out this research, how I carry out this research and in what course I study. I treated all my participants with due respect and I had their verbal, or most of the times written (in the form of e-mails which I have archived) consent, for an interview. Only 3 times I was asked to sign an interview consent form, which I did. I never wheedled or obliged anyone that participated in my research to provide me with information.

An important feature of my thesis is that some of the references at the end of the thesis have been purposefully edited so as not to allow any identification of the university. Therefore, an edited reference is not indicated by any symbol but these instances are, thankfully, very few and limited. My thesis is a publicly available document and I have no

intention of presenting evidence that will be used by somebody in the future in the form of damaging or exonerating facts. By doing this, I fully understand that the narrative in my thesis will have an unworldly, exotic, non-existing and at times imaginative and fictionalised appeal to it.

2.2.3 Case study design

University A is divided administratively into six [edited: *Groups*] that are administrative entities. These *Groups* are subdivided and composed of faculties. A faculty is responsible for organising teaching for an academic programme. Each faculty is responsible for a broad subject area. A faculty board responsible for managing the faculty's teaching provisions governs each faculty. Faculty boards are accountable to the university's general committee. Faculties may or may not be further sub-divided into departments. Where departments are physical entities, they may or may not directly contribute to undergraduate teaching. For example, one of the six *Groups* has several departments but none of them is directly involved in undergraduate teaching. Instead, undergraduate teaching is arranged in [edited: *steps*] with various individuals from each department contributing to teaching in these steps. Therefore, departments in this *Group* cannot be regarded as teaching entities. Where departments are regarded as teaching entities the head of the department represents the department in faculty meetings.

By analysing publicly available organisational charts and documents, it was becoming evident that the organisational structure was anything but uniform and, at the same time, overwhelming in numbers. For example, many lecturers do lectures as well as [edited: disputations], whereas several other teaching staff do only disputations. Therefore, these very large groups of people could not be part of my research sample due to their sheer number and the associated validity issues (i.e. sample size limitations vs. representation). The publicly available organisation charts show that the total subdivisions within all of the *Groups* are forty-nine (49), either faculties or departments.

According to the available organisational charts and documents, a further layer of complexity to my research approach was evident, at first glance, by the multiplicity of arrangements within taught subjects and *Groups*. Therefore, after consultations with the administration office for teaching (AOT) within the university, I came to the conclusion that the target population for my case study research should be faculties or departments for which annual teaching quality statements are required by the AOT. Such a criterion roughly approximated the core lines of communication between the AOT and the various faculties and departments within the university. At the same time, coming to that conclusion identified the core number of teaching committees that are responsible for overseeing the teaching provisions within the university. Such teaching committees will either have a head of a teaching committee (HoTC) or when a teaching committee may not be present, there will be an academic responsible for maintaining lines of communication within a department and the AOT's office. Operational responsibility for taught courses within each department/faculty rests with the teaching committee and therefore I judged that the best way forward was to design a research tool aimed at the HoTCs.

A typical teaching committee in University A is composed of the head of the teaching committee, the departmental administrator (who is usually member of the List of Persons (LOPs) (see below), members of the teaching staff who want to raise issues in the committee's meetings and student representatives. Where teaching fellows are employed by the department/faculty, these persons participate in the committee's meetings. In addition, in large departments there will be a staff-student consultative committee that is sub-ordinate to the teaching committee.

University A has a very complex organisation with multiple layers of associated entities all contributing to its teaching provisions. Being a research-intensive university it has a broad organisational structure that caters for undergraduate as well as graduate teaching. Due to the enormity of the associated structures and the rapidly expanding graduate

teaching provisions, I decided to focus my research exclusively on undergraduate teaching. The reasons were purely practical:

1) University departments have taught courses for undergraduate students but not necessarily for graduate students while some of the members of a department engage in graduate teaching outside of the official jurisdiction of the department.

2) Some university departments will have a graduate teaching committee that oversees the teaching arrangements for the graduate students but some will not or would have deferred such a responsibility to another governing body by forming a coalition of graduate teaching with other departments.

3) Within a given department that has both undergraduate and graduate teaching provisions, the teaching committees would be separate with no lines of communication between the two.

4) Several established organisational structures cater only for graduate students but the overwhelming majority of the organisational structures will cater mainly for undergraduate students.

5) Currently, the graduate teaching provisions is a rapidly evolving sector within University A and governing bodies are formed by coalition of superseding structures and not at the level of the department, if this is to be taken as the basic functional structure responsible for undergraduate teaching.

6) There is yet to be a governmental organisation responsible for overseeing and providing overall quality assessments for the graduate teaching provisions, whereas a governmental mechanism is already established and functional for the undergraduate teaching provisions.

To summarise, University A has a very complex, cobweb-like structure of teaching provisions that do not appear to be easily accessible at first glance. The teaching provisions are diversified and stratified. For all the reasons described above, I have decided to focus on teaching committees, HoTCs and undergraduate teaching, and seek relevant individuals

for follow up interviews only when emerging issues had to be addressed by means of triangulation or second opinion or verification.

2.2.4 Research tool(s)

The research tool I used as part of my research is a set of questions (see Appendix #1) to be answered during a semi-structured interview. These questions are designed to be answered by a person who is a HoTC within a faculty or department of University A: a person that does teaching but also is responsible for decisions on teaching that influence the teaching practices of the other teaching staff. Based on the theoretical frameworks I described in Chapter 1, it was important that the respondent had to satisfy the following criteria:

1) the respondent is in the interface between faculty/department and the university;

2) the respondent represents the faculty/department at the university and the university at the faculty/department;

3) the respondent has experience in teaching and understands what teaching in higher education entails and requires;

4) the respondent has to take decisions on policies and procedures and is held accountable for the decisions;

5) the respondent can critically evaluate if a teaching policy or practice has practical implications on the actual teaching;

6) the respondent is an academic and not just an officer within the university who deals with policy issues and procedures but does not participate in teaching practices;

7) the respondent is a decision-maker and not just an academic staff who is active in putting forward ideas and proposals for teaching policy and practice improvements (persons referred to as *"dissidents"* in interview #2 transcript (see Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log); and finally

8) the respondent might serve several roles which are not obvious before the interview;

All these 8 mutually inclusive criteria forced me to consider only the HoTC as a research sample. However, I also included a question in my research tool in which I ask the respondent to identify other individuals that may be good to seek for a follow-up interview. In most of the cases that a person was identified, in response to this question, I managed to do an interview with that person.

The interview tool contained 4 thematic groups of interview questions:

1) Personal background of the respondent;

2) Teaching committee's role within the department/faculty; that is, the role of the official body that the respondent represents within its immediate community (faculty/department);

3) Teaching committee's role within the university; that is, the role of the official body within its broader context (University A);

4) Teaching committee's role in teaching and learning within its immediate community and its broader context.

The research tool in its final form is presented in Appendix #1 and it is the result of 4 months of intense studying of the relevant literature and extensive editing of the questions.

A deliberate effort was made for the questions to be clear, succinct and to the point and they were carefully edited to eliminate any mention of names or titles and to preserve anonymity.

Although I decided not to send the interview questions to the respondents before the interview, I was forced to do so after an initial and overwhelming hesitation to have respondents agreeing for an interview. I managed to conduct only 5 interviews without sending the interview questions, but eventually managed to conduct a total of 35 interviews after sending the interview questions. To my surprise, only in one occasion (interview #10 transcript, Appendix #2) had the respondent actually looked at the questions and that interview was the shortest, lasting only 23 minutes.

The overwhelming majority did not study the interview questions ahead of the interview. I judge that by:

1) the spontaneity of the responses;

2) the relaxed setting of the interview. All interviews were done in the working environment of the respondents and at times and days that best suited them. I never asked for a specific interview to be done at a particular day and location for my convenience and I never refused any suggestion for an interview date.

3) the several utterances during the interviews (one respondent commented "...*you brought the interview questions? oh, good!...*";

4) the apparently unrehearsed and general improvisation by the respondents in answering the questions which in most cases took the form of answering by covering topics relevant to a following question(s);

Therefore, the methodological issue of not revealing the interview questions beforehand turned out to be a non-issue, after all.

Of the 7 individuals that declined the request for an interview, 2 have declined to do the interview without seeing the interview questions and of those 5 that have seen the interview questions, 2 have declined after repeated attempts to contact them by email, 1 has declined because he/she was abroad, 1 never replied to repeated (>4 times) attempts to contact him/her, and 1 has probably declined after reviewing the questions asking me to look for answers to my questions in the departmental website. The distribution of the persons that were not interviewed into the various *Groups* of the university is shown in Appendix #2. As can be seen in Appendix #2, these 7 individuals are randomly distributed into the various *Groups* and do not affect the sample size of representative interviews from department or faculties across the university.

One criticism that can be levelled at my methodological approach is that I did not carry out pilot interviews to test the research tool and its validity. The reasons were purely practical: Faced with initial hesitation from several HoTCs in agreeing for an interview and not really knowing if any of them will agree for an interview (see next section), I found myself in the very daunting position of having nobody to test the research tool. If I had, as

I originally feared, a small number of respondents, then I would have had to exclude the person I tested the research tool on from subsequent analysis or interviews. Timing was also very important, and I decided to go ahead with the actual interviews without doing pilot interviews. As it turned out (see Results, Chapter 3), the research tool worked fine and provided me with a wealth of data.

2.2.5 Data gathering process

I conducted 2 exploratory interviews that did not test the research tool *per se* but were aimed at getting a sense of current structures and processes within the university that are associated with the monitoring and improvement of teaching, so as to know what I might expect. During those 2 interviews I sought advice as to who should I seek for interviews within the institution at department or faculty level that are charged with teaching improvement and monitoring duties.

The first one was with the head of AOT and the second one was with managers of the [edited: Office for Teaching Technology (OTT)]. These interviews were very informative as to what I might expect and, to a very large extent, determined the context and nature of the research tool. The contents of these interviews were included subsequently in my research analysis.

Having decided about the nature and number of my research sample to which I will use my research tool, I consulted the AOT's office for the best way to contact my research sample. I was given a list of persons (LoPs) within each faculty or department that served as a contact point between the AOT's office and the HoTCs. These LoPs served as the first line of communications between AOT's office and HoTCs given that HoTCs, with very few exceptions, do not hold this position permanently in their department or faculty. In only 7 occasions was the LoP also a HoTC in a department or faculty in University A. In all the other cases, the LoP was an administrative officer or a departmental secretary. I tried to meet each of the LoPs in person at the relevant department/faculty. Whether I met

them or not, I contacted them by email on the same day, to maintain momentum, asking them to arrange an interview with the HoTC of their department/faculty. Below is a representative transcript of an email I sent to a LoP after meeting him/her:

"*Dear [edited: name surname]*

My name is Skarlatos Dedos and I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at the Open University. Further to our brief meeting this morning, I am sending you this email to explain more about my research project and ask how to proceed about setting up an interview appointment with the Head of the Teaching Committee of your Faculty.

I found your name in a list of [edited: persons] that I was encouraged to use for my research project, after an interview with the Head of [edited: AOT]. My EdD research project deals with the role and nature of teaching within [edited: University A]. I am researching my project by conducting semi-structured interviews with Heads of Teaching Committees of each Department or Faculty of the University. I will then undertake an analysis of the teaching practices of the University utilising a combination of policy documents, interview transcripts and archival materials. I understand that the term Teaching Committee may not be used within your Faculty and there may be various Committees, sub-Committees or groups dealing with teaching within the Faculty.

So I would like to find out from you who is the most appropriate person to contact to set up an interview appointment. The interview will only last about 30-40 minutes and it can be conducted at any time is convenient by the Head of the Teaching Committee. In order to ensure that I do not lose any materials, I hope that it is acceptable to you for me to tape record the interview. All responses will be confidential, and anonymity too is guaranteed according to the ethical rules and regulations of the Open University.

I am currently based in [edited: location] so I can come to the Faculty and explain more about my research project in person, if needed. Until recently I was a member of [edited: location] and this is why I have a [edited: email address] suffix in my email address.
I would very much appreciate your help on this matter.
Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best regards
Dr. Skarlatos Dedos"

Identical emails were sent to each LoP, sometimes 4 or 5 times until the name of a HoTC was provided. I sent a similar email to the HoTC requesting an interview date. All of these email exchanges were electronically filed and retained. Occasionally, the HoTC contacted me directly.

In most cases, I had to visit each faculty or department and ask to see the LoP representative and explain what I wanted to do. In almost all cases, when I discussed my case with a LoP, I ended up securing an interview with the respective HoTC.

The LoPs system within University A has the following characteristics:

1) There is only one LoP within each faculty, and where faculties are subdivided within each department, that acts primarily as 'conduit' for the revision of documents, as these documents mostly require the approval of a faculty board or other body.

2) The current contact system between the AOT office and the faculties and departments works with one named individual in each institution (department or faculty).

3) Administrators and, sometimes, academic staff are asked by the head of a department, HoTCs or the AOT office to 'act' as LoPs for their institution. The LoP's role is not permanent within their institution: If the LoP is the secretary of a teaching committee for a given year, then another person may take over as a LoP in the following year or after several years.

The role of each LoP within University A is as follows:

1) LoPs provide information (and paperwork) exchange between the AOT office and the academic staff during the academic year.

2) LoPs try to 'sell' the University's mechanisms for quality assurance to colleagues at the faculty board level.

3) LoPs operate a system of update of programme specifications' statements, making sure that any changes agreed at the faculty board meetings are communicated to the AOT office every academic year.

4) The annual return of the statements of quality assurance and the programme specifications' statements is not always the first priority because LoPs are usually involved in other administrative tasks as well.

After finding out from a LoP the name of their respective HoTC, I contacted each HoTC by email to ask for an interview. In very few cases I received a straightforward positive answer. It was only after several attempts, either by sending a reminder email or by visiting the respective faculty or department that I finally managed to do 35 interviews

with HoTCs out of a total of 42 HoTCs. The whole process lasted 8 months and was a very daunting task.

All the interviews, arranged by email, took place in the working environment of each respondent. I would start the interview by explaining who I was, what I wanted to do, and their position with regard to ethics (e.g. wish to stop the interview at any point). All the participants agreed to the interviews being recorded. Only 3 participants asked me to sign and provide them with an interview consent form. None of the respondents seemed to be disturbed by the tape recorder as judged by the flow of their talk.

After recording the interview, the interview was captured in an electronic digital format using RecordPad software. Commercial software called HyperTRANSCRIBE was used to transcribe on the text module of that software. The produced file was saved and the text pasted into a Microsoft Word file. Listening to the tape again, and correcting minor mistakes in the transcription and words that were initially inaudible was the final polishing step of the interview. All original cassettes containing the interviews are safely kept.

In addition to the interviews, documentation publicly available on the university's website was a rich source of information. Annual departmental quality statements and review reports from the AOT's office were provided to me after being edited by the AOT's office to conceal any names and references. I also obtained access-restricted documents such as minutes from teaching committee meetings. On 3 occasions during the interviews physical artefacts of organisation charts and figures were handed to me. The university's quality reports conducted by non-governmental organisations and independent agencies were obtained too, as were publicly available statistics and archival records. Finally, I participated in several sessions organised by the university's human resources division about staff development initiatives and teaching and learning issues. Thus, I had a substantial amount of extant documentation relevant to my research, in addition to the interview data.

2.2.6 Case study analysis

Apart from the methodological concern that I explained above about the absence of pilot interview(s) with HoTCs to test my research tool, I believe that overall I have attended to all the details that should be in place to make this case study an exemplary one. Although I regret not being able to do pilot interviews with the HoTCs, the reasons for this were purely based on the structural arrangements of the teaching provisions of the university. It was 'the wall of administrators' that practically obscured and maybe deliberately obscured (see Results in Chapter 4) access to the true source of information.

A concern I had throughout the analysis of my results was on the set of questions being too many. Although I estimated that the questions could be answered within 35 minutes, I found that on average the interviews lasted for 55 minutes. Several interviews took as long as 75 minutes and the longest was 90 minutes. Respondent's fatigue was not an issue and I never felt that they felt that I was wasting their time. I found that my interview style gradually became more skilful becoming less and less interruptive and increasingly corroborative.

Another concern I had was interview bias. Bias is one of the weaknesses of the interview as a research technique (Yin 2003, p. 86) and one of the weaknesses of the case study as a method in general (Yin 2003, p. 86). Yin (2003) describes that bias in the technique of interview can be introduced by:

1) Poorly constructed questions. Given the time I have devoted in editing and re-examining the questions in my research tool and the fact that interview questions were answered without ambiguities, I think I have done well in having well-constructed questions.

2) Response bias. I have tried to organise carefully my research tool and attend to all the evidence that were presented to me.

To eliminate bias I employed triangulation (Yin, 2003, p. 97-101) in several occasions during an answer I was given to a question, by asking: "*that person said such and such, is*

that true?". I did that by carefully listening to interviews that I got from HoTC from a similar discipline or *Group* while preparing for the interview. In addition, I rigorously followed any reports of bad management by looking at university archives. I tried and managed to do interviews with other individuals suggested by the HoTCs. I verified independently reports of good practice and had always a good idea about the HoTCs profile before I met them. Furthermore, I always followed up inaccuracies due to poor recall by examining documents or other interview data to eliminate any bias introduced by respondents during the interviews, but these occasions were exceptionally scarce. Validity of data is an important issue in case study research (Bassey 1999; Yin 2003) and I believe I have managed that issue successfully by conducting further interviews with other staff of the university that proved to be valuable commentators to my results.

3) Inaccuracies due to poor recall. On the one hand I have electronic files of all the interviews and archival material that I have gathered. On the other hand, I have tried to eliminate poor recall from the respondents by showing up in the interviews well prepared and informed, from publicly available information, of the teaching practices of each department/faculty. Moreover, before conducting an interview, I always listened to similar interviews i.e. interviews done with other HoTCs from the same discipline within the university.

4) Reflexivity when the respondent gives what interviewer wants to hear. I was particularly aware of this issue during the interviews and although I can not detect when somebody was lying, I must admit that the respondents' narratives were in general not contradictory: I did not get the feeling that they were doing the interview just to tell me what I wanted to hear. I think I was asking well-constructed questions which did not aim to generate reflexivity from the respondent. For example, Silverman (1997) suggests that in a wider context, reflexivity can be encouraged by the interviewer (Silverman 1997, p. 113-129). Since I am not a member of the academic community of University A and I regarded myself as detached from its teaching policies and practices, the respondents were strangers

to me. Moreover, when I conducted the interviews I was already a faculty member of a university in another country. I was explaining that verbally at the beginning of each interview and I think that made a big difference on how the respondents viewed me: I was an "*outsider*" colleague rather than an inquisitive stranger. Having an 85% success rate in securing interviews, I think, provides justification and validates my approach.

5) Detachment from my research subject was another theoretical parameter I had to consider with caution. I did not aspire to improve the teaching practices of my case study subject but rather to record observations objectively. Moreover, as I do not have any aspirations to become an academic member of University A, I do not have a personal involvement in improving the quality of the teaching there.

Notwithstanding all my concerns, I have realised that all the texts, narratives and archival documents I have gathered represent a powerful ordering force that demands a multilevel approach in their analyses. My approach to the analysis and presentation of my results is guided by the detailed methodological approach presented by Alvesson and Karreman (2000) on the study of organisations through discourse analysis. I have thus decided to present an account of the constructions of teaching within University A from a long-range/autonomous (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1135) position and move from Meso-Discourse to Grand-Discourse and to Mega-Discourse to understand the organisation-wide contexts of University A (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1135). Because I am not interested in the social and psychological consequences of the narratives and the feelings and norms presented by the narrators towards the subject of my case study, I posit my methodological approach towards the level of talk (narratives) as loosely-coupled, or more precisely, unrelated to the level of meaning (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1130). I have decided to use this long-range/autonomous (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1135) approach because my study is centred on social reality as discursively constructed and maintained through the use of narratives and archival texts (Alvesson and

Karreman 2000). My approach to 'discourse' analysis is not focused on social text, i.e. narratives, and its social action context (Alvesson and Karreman 2000), but views 'discourse' as general and prevalent systems for the articulation of ideas at the time my research has taken place (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1126) within the boundaries of an organisational social reality. I am not trying to make linguistic sense of an organisation or the institutionalised subunits and their human representatives that have been interviewed (Keenoy *et al.* 1997). The presentation of my results can be viewed as an incremental answer to the question: *To what extent can I move from discourses to Discourse(s)?* (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1146).

Taking this incremental approach (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1146) the main themes that emerged from my initial analysis were the following:

- The loosely-coupled organisational structure, coupled with a widespread common culture that the university has in response to the complexity of its environment;
- The organisational importance of teaching committees in the management and implementation of high quality teaching;
- The prevalence of cross-organisational cultural priorities that favours research over teaching;
- The organisational prevalence of constructs of teaching as a functional outcome of successful research;
- The realism of academic perceptions of the teaching and research priorities demanded of them by the university;
- Academics' perception of accountability and external audit and their response to it;
- Perceptions of teaching excellence and teaching quality by the academic staff;
- The importance of key social processes (e.g. sense-making, loose coupling and environment sensing mechanisms) that enable the university to maintain its elite status.

I consequently focused on the above themes in my analysis of the data collected from the respondents, which is contained in the next chapter.

I focused on these themes because to my understanding and for my research questions: 1) They were the ones that provided me with the best holistic vantage point to examine the construct of teaching of the university, 2) they were the ones that best helped me explain the organisational system and its characteristics, 3) they were the ones that could best foresee how change will be perceived and acted upon by the university as a control system, and 4) they were the sufficiently minimal number of themes that could best provide the answers to my research questions.

I focused on these themes by following a long-range/autonomous position (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1135) and progress from Meso-Discourse to Grand-Discourse and to Mega-Discourse, as proposed by Alvesson and Karreman (2000), by 1) presenting the structures that allow the university to maintain its sense-making mechanisms as functional devices, 2) presenting the constructs of teaching as emergent from both the structures and the sense-making mechanism(s) at the institutional level, 3) presenting the sense-making mechanism(s) of academics that help them make sense of and cope with complexity in the system, and finally 4) showing that a cybernetic control system (Ashby 1956; Conant and Ashby 1970; Steinbruner 1974; Birnbaum 1989) is in place to generate complexity as a mechanism of response to the enormous complexity of the contemporary higher education environment.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1 Overview

In this chapter, I will present the results of my research and organise them in emerging themes. In the following four sections, (sections 3.2 to 3.5), I will present the results at levels of meso- (section 3.2 and 3.3), grand- (section 3.4) and mega-analysis (section 3.5) (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1135) of the constructs of teaching in University A.

In section 3.2, I will present the organisation-wide structure(s) that support the teaching arrangements at the departmental and faculty level within the university. I will explore issues of committee membership, communication, role perception and accountability within the structures.

In section 3.3, I will present the constructs of teaching of University A. I will describe the teaching approaches and unique pedagogical approaches as perceived by the respondents. Then, I will provide statistics on management issues pertinent to the taught courses and analyse respondents' accounts of the promotions system of the university and the rewarding and recognition of quality in teaching.

Moving up a level of analysis in section 3.4, I will present a synthesis of organisation's identity, environment-assessments and actions initiated in the sense-making process of the academics of University A. I will show that the constructs of teaching of University A operate in an environment of subtle adjustments and incremental change.

At the mega-level of analysis (Alvesson and Karreman 2000, p. 1135) in section 3.5, I will present results that show this university to be a cybernetic organisation when it comes to its constructs of teaching. I will show that the university operates by following the law of requisite variety (Ashby 1956), generating complexity to cope with complexity.

3.2 Structures

In this section I present the organisational structure of University A as it emerges from archival material I have gathered and from the interview transcripts. I will link understandings of space and function, as it emerges from the narratives of the respondents, with the teaching practices of the university.

University A has an organisational structure that is subdivided into 6 *Groups* (Appendix #3). This division is largely on the basis of related scientific disciplines that the university engages with either as taught disciplines or research topics. These disciplines are termed in my thesis as acronyms to conceal their identity: H, S, E, B, T and M.

The six *Groups* have a largely administrative role and are not engaged *per se* with undergraduate teaching. Each is managed by an administrative committee and is headed by an academic elected from the institutions that comprise each *Group*. That academic is usually a member of the general council of the university. The *Groups* have dynamic and stratified evolution in the sense that some are recently established (for example, M), while others exhibit a very loose connection with the units that they comprise of (for example, H). By loose connection I mean that units may belong to one *Group* but actually contribute to the teaching practices of another *Group* and not the one they belong to. *Groups* are distinct in the sense that what is taking place in one of these *Groups* does not necessarily impact on what will happen in another *Group*. In none of my interviews did the name *Group* ever came up as a topic of reference in relation to undergraduate teaching. There was no mention of the head of the *Group* as an entity having an impact on what was discussed during the interviews. However, I am not contesting that *Groups* as entities and their heads do not exert any influence in the overall strategic planning of the university. At the level of undergraduate teaching no respondent did ever mention the *Groups*' role or influence.

Each *Group* comprises of a mixture of faculties and departments. Although it is the responsibility of the faculties to organise and implement undergraduate teaching

(Appendix #3) the term 'faculty' sometimes appears and sometimes does not appear as an organisational entity. In interview #19, the respondent gives a rather elaborate account of how faculties come to exist or disappear as names. In the following quote, the respondent shows, with his/her narrative, how unimportant (i.e. worth not remembering) is the name of the faculty he belongs to.

"The other question I have is about the position of the [edited: department name] in the [edited: *Group*] of [edited: T]…
It is the [edited: Group] of [edited: T] and within that there is the Faculty of [edited: EN], the Faculty of [edited: CS]… I think we are called and then there is also the Faculty of [CEBT] and the [JBS]."

The respondent subsequently remembered the name of his/her faculty when I asked him/her to clarify some aspects of the organisation of his/her department that were not becoming clear to me. In the following quote (interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2), the respondent gives a very detailed account of how structures and faculty names change with time, highlighting the pragmatic concept that they do not have a name that people associate with.

"Do you call the [CS] a department?
That is actually a slight issue because we started as a university's [edited: ML]. In 1968 we became the [edited: CS] and we were not formally a department, although we have the role of a department, the name is not the department of [edited: CS] which will be called elsewhere, the [edited: CS] is a good brand name and we are sticking with it. So, informally we refer the department or the [edited: CS] interchangeably, I may say the department if I am thinking in terms of officialdom, but if I am saying oh, I am going into the lab today I am saying I am going to the department today, I use that interchangeably…There is then a faculty, we were originally outside a faculty because we were part of the [edited: M] originally, we now have a faculty of [edited: CSIT] that has only us as the only subject. You had better look at the name for the faculty name…and then we are part of the [edited: Group] of [edited: T] which I mentioned early."

It appears that faculties exist for purely administrative reasons in some cases but in some other cases they ensure the implementation and administration of taught courses.

I have gathered archival data and organisation charts from different departments and faculties (M, T and B) that are presented in the four figures below (Figures 1-4). The figures, starting from Figure 1 and leading to Figure 4, present a rather elaborate and convoluted structuring of the lines of responsibility and communication in relation to the

teaching practices of each department or faculty. For example, Figure 1 shows the general outline of organisational structure within a department of University A. As can be seen, in each department there will be, in general, an organisational structure for undergraduate teaching and a different structure for the postgraduate courses. These two lines of communication do not crossover or interact with each other but mostly run in parallel.

The actual situation, though, is far more convoluted than it appears in Figure 1, because:

1) There are some departments that operate within the 'umbrella' of a faculty that do not have a teaching committee, so in this case one can speak of a 'faculty teaching committee' which is managing the undergraduate course it offers (Appendix #4).

2) There are faculties with no underlying departmental entity within them and in that case there exists, strictly speaking, a 'faculty teaching committee' and not a 'department teaching committee'.

3) There are entities called departments that have and manage their own [edited: *Course*] but the entity of the faculty does not appear, although it exists, as an organisational structure but rather as an institutional structure.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the lines of communication and activity coordination in a department that contributes to teaching in an interdepartmental *Course* are slightly more convoluted than in Figure 1. Consequently, the coordination of departments requires the presence of additional teaching committees or coordination and management committees (Figure 3), while for some *Course* the lines of communication extent to other faculties as well (Figure 4). Such coordination is currently required only at 6 *Courses* (Appendix #4) and the coordination is especially convoluted at the NS *Course* (Appendix #4) that is carried out by 13 departments. As shown in each Figure (1 to 4), the departmental teaching committees are the ones in which all reporting lines should be leading to and it is left to the perceived need of this committee for any reporting to move upwards. So the departmental teaching committees are responsible for accountability issues arising from the implementation of each *Course* within the faculty.

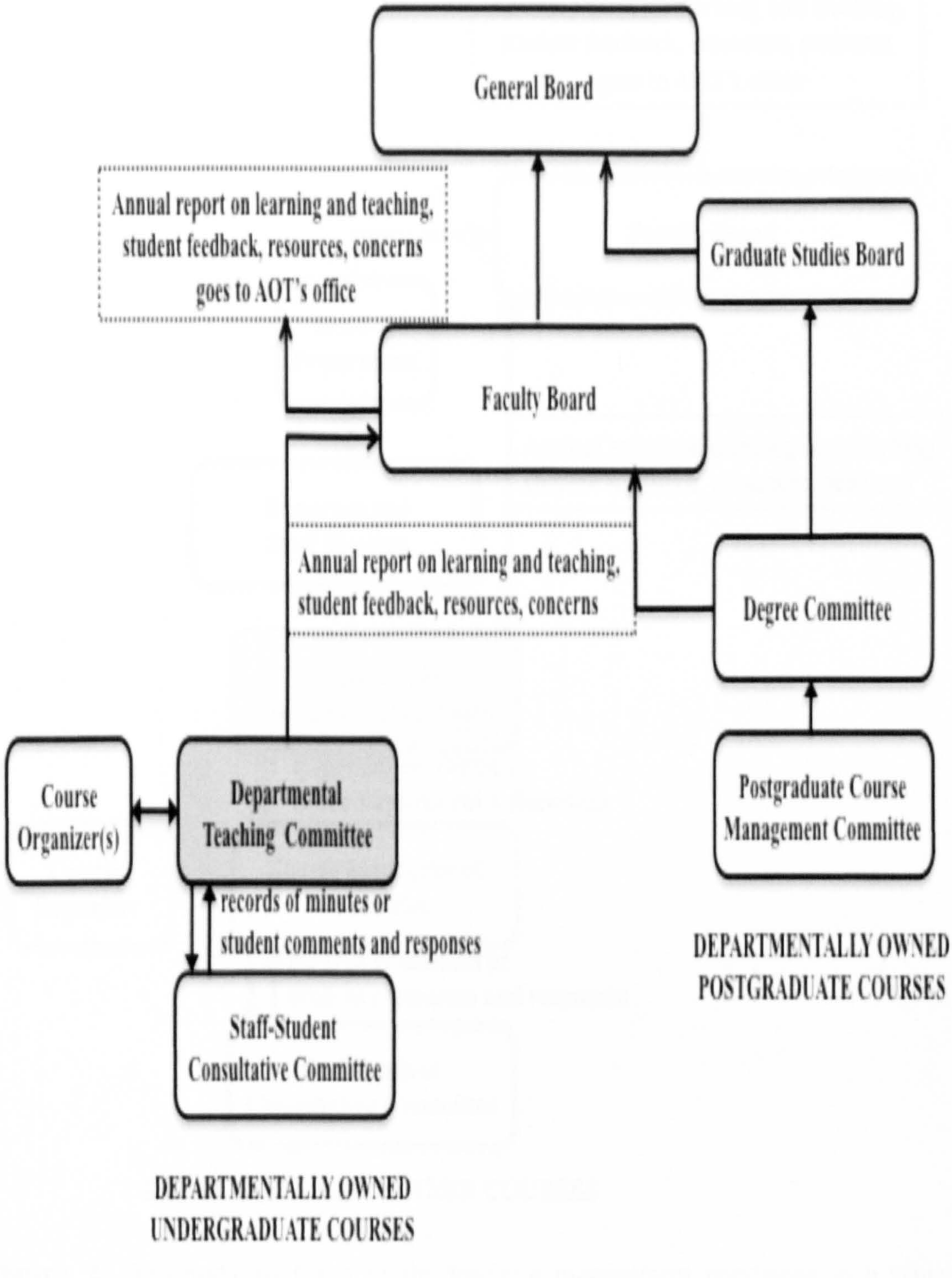
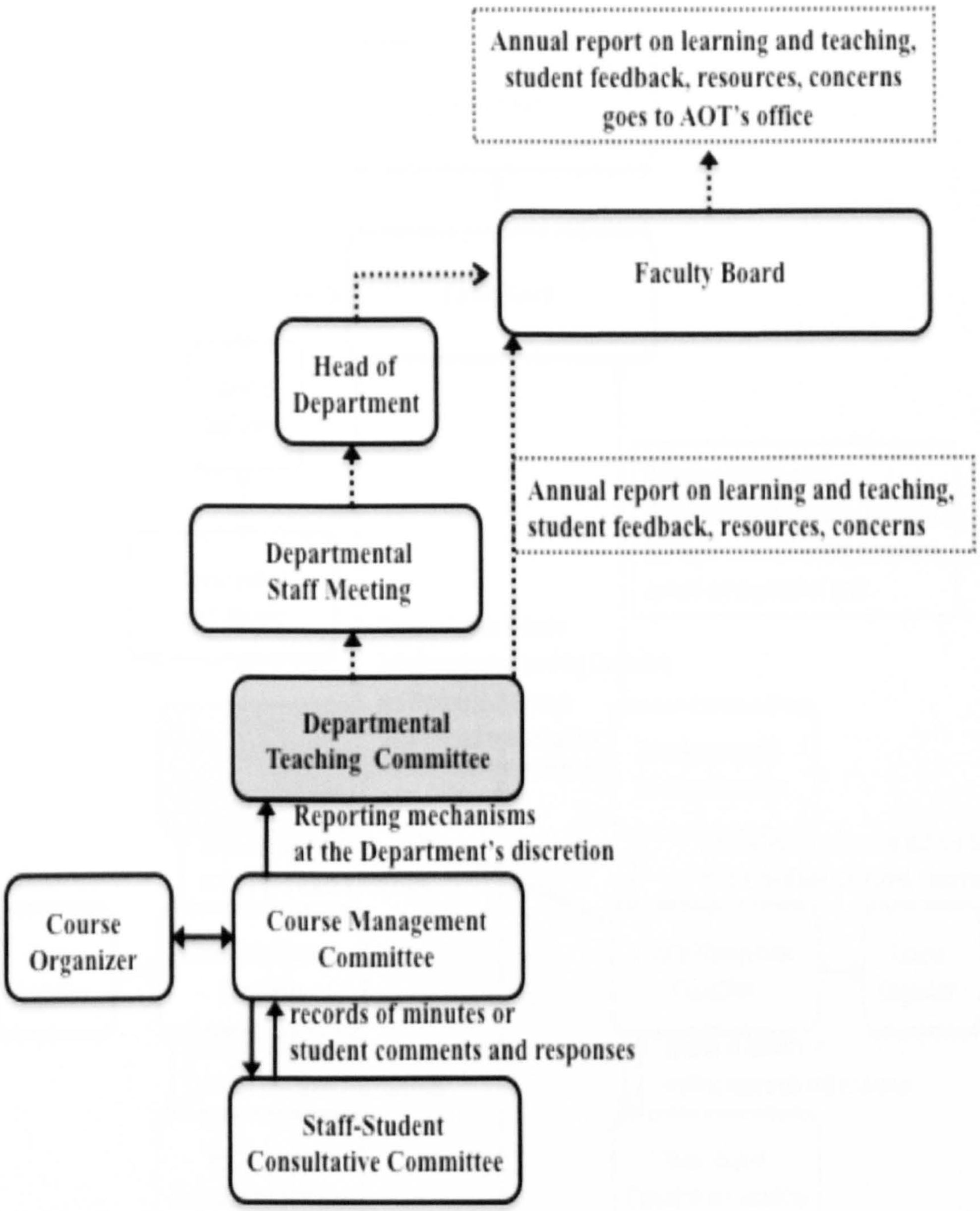


Figure 1: Organisational Chart of the teaching management provisions in a typical department within University A.

Many departments offer postgraduates courses in addition to their single undergraduate course. This figure represents a case where one department is under one faculty and offers its own course with no collaboration with other departments.



DEPARTMENTALLY OWNED COURSES

Figure 2: Organisational Chart of the teaching management provisions in a typical department within University A where a teaching committee operates.

Solid arrows indicate direct lines of communication and dotted arrows indicate lines of communication used at perceived need. This figure represents a case where a department is under one faculty but offers a course in collaboration with other departments.

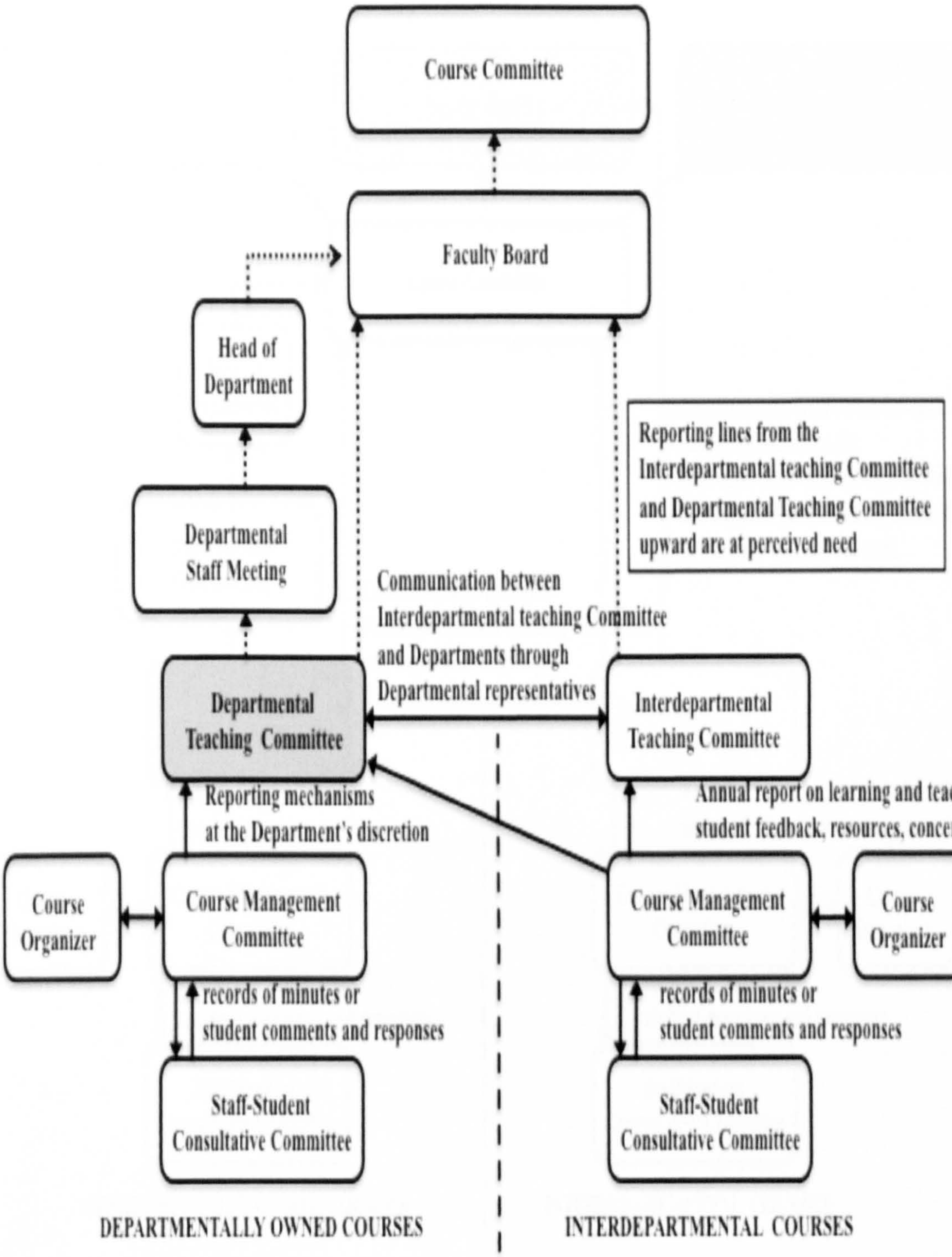


Figure 3: Organisational Chart of the teaching management provisions of a typical taught course of University A that is organised and implemented by more than one department within a faculty.

Solid arrows indicate direct lines of communication and dotted arrows indicate lines of communication used at perceived need. Course organiser is an individual academic and there can be more than one course organisers for each course.

Figure 4: Organisational Chart of the teaching management provisions of a typical taught course of University A that is organised and implemented by more than one faculty.
Solid arrows indicate direct lines of communication and dotted arrows indicate lines of communication used at perceived need. Course organiser is an individual academic and there can be more than one course organisers for each course. Although only 3 faculties are shown, there can be more than 3 faculties involved and they may belong to different *Groups*.

On top of these complex organisational settings that supervise the taught *Courses*, there exists complexity in the ways faculties manage their teaching provisions and organise their courses. For example, faculties offer *Courses* where certain aspects of the taught course are facilitated by other faculties or institutions. These 'aspects' are referred to as papers (a set of lectures provided by a different faculty or institution within a given *Course* and a given year) and are used extensively (reported, for example, in transcripts of interview #33, #6, #35, Appendix #3). In these cases, the general patterns depicted in Figures 1-4 still exist but more lines of communications are operating and additional resources are drawn. This presents another layer of diversification that was explained by one respondent (Appendix #2: Additional Interview Schedule Log, Interview #8):

"So what we have right now is that there are 6 [edited: Groups], 2 of them working together, but basically 5 different models, in time they will settle down I am sure, but this is a bottom up development..."

As such, it was extremely difficult to identify common standards in the teaching committees' terms of reference in the various departments or faculties. As an example, I provide below 2 sets of terms of reference from 2 different departments. In the first example, the list of terms of reference is stated as such but in the second case, the list is referred to as responsibilities of the teaching committee.

Terms of reference example #1:

- *"To define the academic content of the undergraduate courses in [edited: discipline].*
- *To assign teaching duties to staff members and others.*
- *To assign examining duties to staff members, and to draw up guidelines for examining.*
- *To monitor teaching loads of staff.*
- *Mentoring of new staff members.*
- *To advise the head of department on implications of staff leave requests.*
- *To monitor quality of teaching (lectures, practicals, departmentally-organised [edited: disputations] etc.). Monitor feedback from questionnaires, staff-student consultative committee, year groups, supervisors meeting etc., and take appropriate action.*
- *To monitor and respond to feedback on examinations from internal and external examiners.*
- *To propose and monitor expenditure on teaching.*
- *To liaise as appropriate with [deleted], central University bodies and committees and external bodies."*

Terms of reference example #2:

- *"To establish, monitor and evaluate the aims and objectives of courses taught by the Department within the framework of the [edited: course]*
- *To consider, evaluate and implement proposals for new teaching and learning elements in Departmental courses*
- *To respond on behalf of the Department to teaching and learning issues raised by the Faculty and the University*
- *To consider reports from examiners on the conduct of the examinations and respond to, and where appropriate implement changes that are recommended*
- *To consider, respond to, and where appropriate implement proposals arising from the minutes of the consultative and management Committees of courses taught by the Department*
- *To develop policies and procedures for the future of Departmental Courses within the framework of the [edited: course] and the educational policy of the University*
- *To consider and advise on staff development and training relevant to the teaching of this course"*

These 2 statements reveal a wide disparity in the aims and actions to be taken by the teaching committee in these different departments and notably the only common theme is the response to external examiners. External examiners were an issue that appeared to be taken very seriously by most of the HoTCs that I have interviewed. Here are some of the quotes that I have recorded:

"External examiners who come in and make recommendations, we take those very seriously, we have to sort of oblige to respond to every point they raise and we do so every year"
(interview #10 transcript, Appendix #2)

or:
"Our big scrutinisers are external examiners"
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

or:
"I think that the one external body that we pay a lot of attention to is the external examiners. Every year we have 3 external examiners, they are chosen to be senior figures from the [edited:name] group of universities, people we regard as being at our level. And if they say they do not like something we take it very seriously because our aim is to make sure that we are doing things in a way that is comparable with the top rank universities in this country. If [edited :audit agent] says [edited:discipline] should have more social contacts, well they.....they are not in a position to do that."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

or:
178 [1] *"Yes, we do. I mean, even if they are not at departmental level, external examiner for*
179 *[edited: course name] has made some suggestions about our examination which we*
180 *are actively discussing."*

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[1] Line numbers throughout the thesis refer to line numbers of Appendix #6 (pages 151-158) where an exemplary interview transcript (interview #12 transcript) is presented.

(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

It is important to note that the questions in the research tool (Appendix interview #1) make no mention of external examiners, or any question related to how a department/faculty deals with them, because I knew that it was standard practice that the university had to go through. The above quotes show that external examiners' reports are dealt with at the teaching committee level and one of the jobs of the HoTC is to operate a 'buffer zone' in the way responses to external examiners' requests are dealt with: minimise damage by dealing seriously with them and consider as valuable comments from external examiners that are on a par with the HoTC.

Membership in a teaching committee is equally diversified and does not follow any rules. As a rule of thumb, members of a teaching committee are: 1) The departmental co-ordinator of teaching who is the HoTC or chairman of the committee. 2) Members of the academic staff who are representatives or co-ordinators of taught courses, in the case where the department or faculty contribute to more than one *Courses*. In addition, there will be representatives or co-ordinators of the taught course from the various years of *Course* study. 3) The departmental secretary (who is usually the departmental LoP). 4) The secretary of the committee. Student representatives may or may not sit on the teaching committee depending on whether there is a staff-student consultative committee in operation in the department/faculty. When there are issues to be raised by members of the teaching staff, these persons participate in committee's meetings. Finally, where a department or faculty employs teaching fellows, these persons participate in the committee's meetings.

It must be stressed, however, that 1) although the above mentioned composition of the teaching committee may be the unwritten rule, there is extensive variation in the way teaching committees are composed and how they operate and 2) from the interviews that I have conducted, the university does not appear to impose a general rule on teaching committee's structure and operations. For example, in no interview have I recorded any

mention of university's guidelines about the terms of reference of the teaching committee and I have recorded a varied repertoire of answers to Question #8 (Appendix #1) about the role of the teaching committee:

"Well it is the teaching committee that basically manages the program so one has to try to have a balanced committee that represents all main strands of interest within the subject of [edited:discipline], including outside members, so we have to have theoreticians, people who do experiments that is experimental teaching, we try to balance all balances, approximately 10 people."
(interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2)

"It oversees basically the undergraduate course and we would expect them to sanction changes, to keep an eye if something was not going right, if there was poor feedback from the students and so on, and basically to create policy: how long will a project be, what credits will it get, how many exam papers will there be, these are all things that would be discussed in the teaching committee. Possibly they will be referred down to the other members of staff, then come back to the teaching committee, basically they are mainly formulating the broad policy, I would say that is how it works"
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

For one respondent a teaching committee is a policy-setting forum while for another it is a balance-striking managerial group.

One final, but very critical, aspect of the organisational structure of the university, when it comes to teaching, is that of accountability. The research tool contained a question about accountability (Question #17, Appendix #1) which was answered in a quite uniform way by all the respondents.

"Within this university where is this teaching committee accountable?
Well, technically we are accountable to the head of the department. So we will report to the head of the department and in fact we report to a committee of the professors which essentially advises the head of department.
So you are not accountable to the education section?
We are accountable in the sense that if there is an educational issue within the department, I will be expected to respond to them but I am essentially doing it on behalf of the head of department. It is a kind of devolved responsibility."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

"The teaching committee reports to the university's teaching offices committee in the department and to the head of department."
(interview #3 transcript, Appendix #2)

"Well, it is accountable directly to the executive board of the department and the head of the department, and the head of the department largely devolves that to me as the deputy head of department but the head of the department is formally a member of the teaching committee and he can come to the teaching committee meetings and ask questions and if we think that he should be in a teaching committee meeting we ask him to come for matters

that are of strategic importance to this department. We are also accountable to the faculty board and...I mean...I sit on the faculty board essentially because of my position."
(interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2)

"It is not, that is the problem. It works in parallel with the official university, so it is purely within this department.
So you are not accountable to the head of the department?
Oh yes, but that is within the department, but that is not really within the university."
(interview #4 transcript, Appendix #2)

224 "Within the department, the teaching committee is quite clear, teaching committee is
225 accountable to the staff meeting and effectively accountable to the head of
226 department, now, in formal terms, in university education, the overall responsibility
227 for teaching lies with the Faculty, so eventually the head of department and the
228 department are responsible to the Faculty
232 So, it is a rather diffused line of accountability but the line of accountability is
233 there."
(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

"It is accountable to our faculty board which is the instrument of the faculty, and then the faculty reports to the general board. There is no sibling interaction between the teaching committee of this department and any other department."
(interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

"We do not directly interact with the [edited: Group], what happens is that the chairman of the faculty sits on the [edited: Group] ...and reports back. The faculty board does not initiate changes, and reports directly to the general board"
(interview #10 transcript, Appendix #2)

"We were scrutinised by the teaching and learning committee...people but to tell you the truth I don't know anything else apart from that, it doesn't operate at my level, in a sense, that is going to the faculty"
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

All these quotes reveal a system of devolved, single-level accountability that operates upwards only as far as the head of the department or the faculty. Accountability is not perceived as a serious issue - and in certain cases it is not perceived at all as part of the role of a HoTC (interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2) - in the way a teaching committee operates and manages its affairs within University A. This inevitably creates management approaches that operate on a personal level, rather than what is hoped for, i.e. institutional level. This diffused accountability on educational management is one of the distinct features that I found during my research and as will be discussed later, it creates a decentralised and deflationary approach towards management of the whole educational process.

3.3 Constructs

University A provides undergraduate teaching to its students in the following forms: 1) Lectures, organised in the traditional form in lecture theatres 2) Disputations organised as small group teaching 3) Practicals, organised as small group teaching in departments where practical demonstrations and activities are an integral part of the teaching provisions 4) Mini-projects, organised as assessed activity carried out by individual students or groups of students. In addition, there exist a variety of other activities (i.e. field trips or specialised training, as in the case of medical students) that are regarded as teaching practices but are not for obvious reasons universally adopted by all departments and faculties.

Among the four teaching practices described above only lectures and disputations are used across all the departments and faculties of the university. Whereas attending a lecture is not mandatory for undergraduate students, participation in disputations is mandatory. Practicals and mini-projects are discipline-dependent and used in some but not all of the *Courses*. Being discipline-dependent, they have a varied content and aim.

One of the questions in the research tool (Question #29, Appendix #1) was designed to identify which of the teaching practices, i.e. a practice in which teaching excellence can be identified in higher education institutions according to Skelton (Skelton 2005, p. 35), best describes the teaching provisions of each department or faculty according to each HoTC's views. The exact question was phrased as follows:

"According to an author in [edited: country name] higher education there are 4 categories of teaching excellence. These are: 1) the lecture-based, 2) the work-based learning, 3) the group work and 4) the participatory dialogue. Which of these categories do you believe that best describes the teaching provisions of your Department/faculty?"

The respondents' answers are categorised in Table 1 below:

Teaching Institution (1)	Role of HoTC in Dept/faculty	Interview No.	Skelton's categories 1	2	3	4
CH (Department)	Lecturer	1	√			
PH (Department)	Professor	2	√		√	√
CE (Department)	Lecturer	3	√	√	√	√
PDN (Department)	Professor	4	√	√	√	√
MA (Faculty)	Professor	5	√			√
LA (Faculty)	Lecturer	6	√			√
GE (Department)	Lecturer	7	√	√	√	√
SA (Department)	Professor	8	√		√	√
PH (Department)	Lecturer	9	√		√	√
M (Faculty)	Lecturer	10	√			√
PPS (Faculty)	Lecturer	11	√			√
GE (Department)	Lecturer	12	√		√	√
ES (Department)	Lecturer	13	√	√	√	√
EP (Department)	Lecturer	14	√		√	√
PA (Department)	Head of Department	15	√	√	√	√
MS S3	Teaching Coordinator	16	√	√	√	√
EN (Faculty)	Professor	17	√			√
MS S1	Teaching Coordinator	18	√	√	√	√
CL (Department)	Professor	19	√			√
EC (Faculty)	Lecturer/Administrator	20	√		√	√
HI (Faculty)	Lecturer	21	√		√	√
Z (Department)	Lecturer	22	√			√
AMES (Faculty)	Head of Faculty	23	√		√	√
AHA (Faculty)	Head of Faculty	24	√			√
MS S2	Teaching Coordinator	25	√	√	√	√
BI (Department)	Professor	26	√	√	√	√
ASNC (Department)	Lecturer	27	√		√	√
PS (Department)	Professor	28	√	√	√	√
LE (Department)	Professor	29	√			√
CL (Faculty)	Lecturer	30	√		√	√
BA (Department)	Lecturer	31	√			√
MS (SSC)	Teaching Coordinator	32	√	√	√	√
E (Faculty)	Professor	33	√	√	√	√
JBS	Lecturer	34	√			√
AR (Department)	Lecturer	35	√	√	√	√
Total 35			**Total 35**	**Total 13**	**Total 23**	**Total 34**

Table 1: Perceptions of teaching practices.

Perceptions of teaching practices were identified by respondents in relation to Question #29 of the research tool (Appendix #1) on the categories of teaching excellence as defined by Skelton (Skelton 2005). Colours refer to different *Groups* as presented in Appendix #3 **(1):** See Appendix #2 (Interview Schedule Log) for acronyms.

There was considerable discord in the way the respondents answered this question. Some (for example, respondent #21) initially responded positively for category No. 2 in the question and then later retracted his/her statement. Others, for example respondent #35,

identified work-based learning as an integral part of their course but surprisingly respondent #34 did not identify that element as part of their course, although their course involves a mini-project and student allocation to a commercial company as mandatory for the completion of the course. I think the confusion was derived from the wording of work-based learning and the implied notion of vocational training. On the other hand, those HoTC from the M *Group* clearly identified work-based learning as part of their course. The positive response to category No. 3 was much increased because several of the courses in University A involve a great deal of group work either as practicals or mini-projects, especially in the later years of the courses. Almost all respondents recognised disputations as a form of participatory dialogue.

Analysis of all the transcripts in response to Question #29 of the research tool (Appendix #1) showed that the respondents were not misled by the wording 'teaching excellence' in the beginning of the question: They did not answer the question based on what they considered as excellent teaching practices in their department/faculty but rather they simply identified one of the categories as relevant to their course content. On hindsight, Question #29 was the most problematic of all the questions in the research tool and proved to be much less resourceful than I hoped for.

University A organises its taught courses in a modular, multi-part system that is called [edited: *Course*]. A *Course* lasts for three or four years and allows substantial changes in the field of study between its various layered modules. Some of these *Courses*, especially the large ones that accept several hundreds of students (Appendix #4), are designed to incorporate a very broad range of disciplines. In these cases, contribution to the taught subjects comes from a large number of independent departments. This design allows high flexibility of choice for the students who can choose among a wide range of offered curricula within one scientific field. Because the modules exist in 2 stages (Stage I and Stage II (a Stage III is optional)), a student, after completion of Stage I, can choose to move out of a subject and do a complementary *Course* and still qualify for a degree. This

highly versatile design in the structure of the *Courses* is one of the characteristic constructs of teaching in this elite university.

At the institutional level it allows for collaborations in teaching between different departments or faculties, practically on top of what already exists. This element is conveyed in the following quote from Interview #2 transcript (Appendix #2):

"we are sharing a course this year with [edited: faculty name] in the final year which is not part of [edited: discipline] and we share 1 or 2 courses with Mathematics. This is actually quite a topical area we are actually looking at trying to build more collaboration."

The *Course* structure allows mergers between departments to be executed more smoothly at the level of teaching provisions. To this end, quite revealing is the following quote on a recently concluded merger between a faculty and an institute in which the institute was not previously providing undergraduate teaching (Interview #3 transcript, Appendix #2):

"We are not looking for directions, we are keeping the [edited: Course] and we already teach aspects of [edited: institute's name] in that, in our [edited: Stage I] and [edited: Stage II] and we want to review what is taught in those courses using the expertise of these people in [edited: institute's name]."

At other instances, mergers may be not executed so smoothly as the following quote shows (Interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2):

"and we share aims with maybe many of those courses but we do not want to jump into...a) we have 2 issues: one is we do not want to jump to bed with anyone of them to the exclusion of the others, and the last time we tried to share with [edited: faculty name] we were slightly rebuffed in the fact that we wanted to suggest that in addition to the traditional [edited: discipline]like [edited: discipline], that [edited: discipline] would also be appropriate, after all it is [edited: discipline] to build mobile phone infrastructure, but this was rebuffed by the [edited: faculty name] in not so much that it was not a good idea but when it comes down to which parts of [edited: discipline] do we remove from the compulsory course to the students....so, surrounding Leviathans are slightly monolithic, so if something new comes in something has to go out and so when this was thought of being introduced, the [edited: faculty name] felt that this would be interesting and they would lose members (students). Of course, this was at the time of the dot.com boom, in the dot.com bust maybe there is risk that we would worry about losing our students to the other guys."

The same respondent was the only one that, in response to Question #25 (Appendix #1), identified the *Course* system as a distinctive teaching construct in University A. He/she, however, talked of weaknesses (Interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2):

" I would say also as a secondary thing maybe the [edited: Course] system, but on the other hand it is the oldest modular system in a way because it allows you to change subjects so it is neither an authoritarian system where there is no change and neither is a true modular system but it is somewhere in the middle which I think has both strengths and weaknesses."

One of the weaknesses of the *Course* system is that it allows students to switch for Stage II (or the optional Stage III) to another *Course* that might be less demanding or may more easily lead them to a degree.

Another weakness of the *Course* system is that its existence for a faculty essentially *defines* the faculty. In other words, a faculty exists because it offers a *Course* that according to the admissions statistics has a high number of applications from students and therefore is considered in demand. Because, however, there is a largely skewed reality between the number of applicants and the number of offers (Appendix #4), smaller departments define their existence by the high demand for the *Course* they offer.

This point is explicitly illustrated in the following quote from Interview #11 (Appendix #1 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log):

"what is very interesting is that little departments come to define themselves by their Course. And without seeing what a huge load of administration and teaching this places on a tiny department, you know, they simply do not see the huge saving of having something like the [edited: Course name]. But the [edited: Course name] is also good for our students. They form a much more rounded view of a subject of an area."

Respondent #11 has an excellent vantage point about educational matters by being a member of the Education Committee in University A. As such, he/she is a strong supporter of the *Course* system:

"The [edited: Course] system is incredibly valuable. The [edited: Course name] is a brilliant idea. It is very broad, introductory thing, individual departments do not have to provide all the teaching across all the years."

He/she refers to a very famous *Course* of University A as a brilliant idea. This *Course* is very old and very broad, encompassing within one course a very broad subject area and drawing in a total of 17 departments from University A. He/she refers to it as:

"Big [edited: Courses] is an old solution to a new problem"

and the problem according to him/her is:

"The students on the whole...there is a general feeling that people want inter-disciplinarity, people want the choice to be able to do courses, they are largely within one subject but taking on courses from another in order to give themselves a particular set of competencies and the [edited: Course] structure in the university does not really encourage that, in fact, it encourages quite the opposite"

and recommends that small *Courses* should conglomerate into one big *Course*:

"One of the recommendations is that social sciences should go on from being a whole variety of little [edited: Courses] to being like [edited: Course name]."

University A has a variety of *Courses* that offers to its undergraduate students and they range from very large in student numbers to very small (Appendix #4). The available statistics from the last 3 years (Appendix #4) show that some *Courses* are very popular and receive a great number of applications while others have a higher applicants to offers ratio. Competition for entry is thus fierce with some *Courses* receiving almost 1 in 10 of its applicants.

Despite the highly competitive nature of the admissions process (Appendix #4 and #5) one interesting aspect of the *Course* system is the student to faculty staff ratio for faculties that run their own *Courses* and directly receive their own students. As can be seen in the examples presented in Table 2, the student to staff ratio is on average 3.5, and for some departments this allows a high degree of intimacy between students and staff especially when a department oversees the teaching of about 25 students every year (48.1 % offers, Appendix #4) and employs 8 academics, thereby nullifying the need for a teaching committee (ANSC (D), interview #27 transcript, Appendix #2).

Courses	Student/Academic StaffRatio
EN (F)	5.3
AMES (F)	2.6
AHA (F)	3.7
ANSC (D)	3.1
CL (F) *	3.3
PH (F)	4.3
DI (F)	2.9
MML (F)	3.2
M (F)	5.1
MA (F)	2.9
EN (D)	5.3
CL (D)	2.0
HI (F)	4.5
AR (F)	2.0
EC (F)	5.6
E (F)	0.5(*)
LA (F)	4.3
LE (D)	3.3
PPS (F)	3.1

Table 2: Student to academic staff ratio for *Courses* offered by University A.

The table shows the student to academic staff ratio for 19 of the *Courses* offered by University A. A full list of the *Courses* is shown in Appendix #4. The ratios were calculated for the academic year 2008-2009 and are rounded to the approximation of one decimal unit. The number of students was calculated from the offers ratio in Appendix #4 for the academic year 2008-2009. Academic staff are those individuals currently employed as university lecturers and above (lecturers to professors). The numbers of academic staff for each faculty or department were taken from the official journal of the university. *Courses* with no direct admission and *Courses* that use multiple departments are not included. Colours refer to different *Groups* as presented in Appendix #3 * Indicates that there are 2 *Courses* offered from one faculty. (*): This particular faculty runs other additional courses as well.

I have conducted structured observations (i.e. attended the lectures) of one particular very large *Course* (NS, Appendix #4) for which, based on my scientific background, I could understand the lecture content and I have gathered and used as archival material the lecture handouts and notes offered to students by two particular departments (PH

(department), interview #9, Appendix #2 and BI (department) interview #26, Appendix #2). The structured observations showed that the lectures' content, in those lectures that I have attended, was at the forefront of the scientific research and the syllabus was directly related to the scientific research of the lecturer that was delivering the lecture.

For a given lecture, analysis of the content of the lectures' handouts against the lecturer's research interests showed that the latest scientific knowledge is incorporated in the lecture's content and corroborated the statement in interview #1 (Appendix #2):

"...We used to have courses on reaction [edited: discipline] but the people who did that left so now we don't. So we are kind of research led on that part."

Such an approach to lecture content, in turn, leads to a course syllabus of high intensity and specialisation (interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2):

"It effects the way we teach in the sense that I was trying to say in the beginning, we have good students and we do not shy away from making it difficult for them"

and according to respondent #1 (interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2) this approach of highly intense and specialised syllabus is enabled by the quality of the students:

"Whereas you can imagine that if you had not such good students and with not such motivation you will have to teach them in a different way basically. We do not say, oh come along kiddies, this is fun, we say [edited: discipline]! Begin!"

The high scientific content in conjunction with the attested quality of the students was corroborated in respondent #19 (interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2) who in response to Question #23 (Appendix #1) replied:

"...it is very different, so we have high expectations, in fact we won't shy of introducing advanced material from the first year for this purpose.
So you pitch your teaching at a very high level?
Yes, yes absolutely, and we would take the view...that actually slightly arrogantly perhaps we take the view that our 3rd year, out of the 3 years they get as an undergraduate here, covers at least as much material as many other universities' 4 year Master's courses."

What these quotes allude to is that University A by being a world-class, research-intensive university uses research interest-driven syllabus content for its *Courses* and enlists the research expertise of its academic staff to structure the syllabus. In this way, students are recipients of knowledge that is at the forefront of scientific research as

commented in interview #6 (Interview Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log):

"When it is at its best, having the world leader in the field talking to newly, young students coming up, must be amazing. Here are these young people having read the work of that world expert and here is he or she talking to them. Getting that leading edge idea into their thinking. That is why we are special."

In answering Question #26 of the research tool (Interview Appendix #1), all respondents replied that the single most distinctive feature of the teaching practices of this university that sets it apart from other universities is the [edited: *disputations*] system.

Disputations are a system of teaching sessions that supports and complements the lecture-based curriculum in University A. It is a teaching session that lasts one hour and the participants are a group of students and an educator. The group of students is usually small, ranging from one student (individual *disputations*) to less than half a dozen but usually the group consists of two to three students. The educator can be either a member of the faculty staff, a teaching fellow, a researcher contracted by the university to do research but also paid to work in *disputations*, a Ph.D. student or even a freelance educator. A number of papers and books have been written about this pedagogical approach (Tapper and Palfreyman 1998; Tapper 2000; Palfreyman 2001) which gives the opportunity to students of a *Course* to receive personal attention from the educator and thereby understand the taught subject better. Typically, ahead of the disputation, the students will have to write and hand to the educator an essay, or answer a set of questions that is then marked by the educator and discussed during the hour of the disputation. For example, one educator's approach to *disputations* is (interview #5, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log):

"You have lecture handouts, and at the end of the handout there is a set of questions which cover some material done during the lectures or to reinforce the lectures. You ask the students to do some of the questions, you go over them and you go over them during the [edited: disputations] and point out problems."

While another's is (interview #7, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log):

"I always ask for students to hand work in....they do a certain number of questions and then we discuss their answers during the hour."

While another educator uses also the essay approach (interview #4, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log):

"I normally give them students something to prepare and do, which can either be writing an essay, or they should have done some multiple choice questions or some short answer questions...there is also a part of discussing things that they find difficult"

Disputations are combined with discussions on the scientific content of the lectures when students take the opportunity to ask explanatory questions on things they have not understood in lectures or during practical work. As described in an official statement by a department:

"The purpose of the [edited: disputations] is to clarify, focus and extend the work the student has been set."

Although different respondents highlighted different aspects when asked about the role of the disputation system, they all agree that *disputations* enable students to benefit from the availability of this supportive, supplementary pedagogical approach

"It makes things easier for the lecturers to cover more material in less time by knowing that someone else is going to help them out....I think it is a complement for the lectures."
(interview #5 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"The [edited: disputation] system is very important in preparing the students, addressing problem areas and preparing them for the exams"
(interview #4 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"They form a support role for the lecturing system....It underpins the academic side of teaching"
(interview #7 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

by allowing the students to clarify issues they find difficult to understand, enabling them to synthesise their thoughts by writing essays that will be assessed and discussed and encouraging them to develop disciplinary skills.

Disputations are the distinctive feature of the teaching practices of University A and several of the respondents praised this pedagogical approach…

"The strength of this university is the individual tuition that you get...nowhere else are you going to have a system like that"
(interview #6 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

…because *disputations*' strength lies in the intimate environment where they are taking place…

"People who say that class sizes do not make a difference are talking nonsense…here we have a class size of two and three, you can not beat that and that is the pedagogical underpinning that you need for a special university"
(interview #6 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"If you are going to theorise it, then I would argue that dialogue is really important in forming your thinking and having to articulate your thoughts to somebody who is going to allow you to make mistakes to help you to learn…"
(interview #6 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

…and this intimacy fosters a dialogic approach to learning…

"But the real teaching and learning, as we know, actually goes on in the [edited: disputations] and they are dialogic in the deepest sense of the word"
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

…and a highly disciplined approach to developing skills:

"The essay a week forces those students to take ideas in from different sources to get very good and quick about using and gathering information and synthesising it, and that act of synthesisation through writing is one of just the great disciplines. They do have to work hard to do it properly and then they have to present their work back to their [edited: educators] who then dialogue and discuss it with them. A very, very powerful pedagogical model, isn't it?…"
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

As such, I consider *disputations* to be a pedagogical gem and I am in agreement with one respondent who commented:

"[edited: disputations] are a luxury but a very good luxury"
(interview #4 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

In conclusion, University A through its *Courses* operates a mixed system of undergraduate teaching provisions in which lectures are given by faculty staff and these lectures are complemented by *disputations* that allow students to benefit the most from the *Course* content:

"in fact you could summarise teaching in University A that the lecturer goes rather too fast for the average member of the course, which gets a lot of material done in a course and the [edited: disputation] system mends the holes in that and the reason why it is a good idea is that on average different students have problems in different parts of the course so rather than teaching the whole course slower, you actually teach the whole course in full speed and you allow the [edited: disputations]… the [edited: disputation] system allows various

facets of it to be expanded on demand for the students. It is expensive in terms of manpower, but actually, of course, being a research university…as a department by the way, most of our [edited: disputations] are done by our research students and they are good for [edited: disputations] because they have often done the course recently or related course"
(interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

In the research-intensive environment of University A are there initiatives, policies or trends that promote teaching as a scholarly preoccupation of academics (Boyer 1990; Kreber 2002b; Kreber 2002a; Kreber 2006) just like those happening in other countries (Kreber 2006)? One strand of my research approach was to identify elements of teaching excellence either as one part of the teaching practices or as part of the overall structure of the teaching provisions. More specifically, I was looking for constructs of teaching that analysis will show to be excellent. My approach towards identifying excellent constructs of teaching was guided, as Kreber suggests (Kreber 2000), by what academics *do* that is recognised as excellent and not only what they *produce*. I was not interested in whether the components of the construct are either good or bad; is the overall construct considered excellent? Kreber suggests that scholarly preoccupation with teaching should be distinguished from excellence in teaching because whereas the former is a conditional preoccupation the latter is a personality attribute (Kreber 2001). I was not looking for excellence in teaching as a personality attribute, i.e. I was not looking for those academics that students or colleagues call excellent teachers (Kane *et al.* 2004). Such personality attributes have been extensively researched and well documented (Elton 2001; Kane *et al.* 2004; Elton 2006) and surely are personality attributes of some (do numbers matter?) academics of University A.

My research tool (Appendix #1) was designed to address this issue and identify constructs of teaching where the word excellent would be appropriate. More specifically, in designing the questionnaire (Appendix #1), I was expecting that elements of teaching excellence would be brought forward in the answers of the respondents to Questions #15, #19, #20, #21, #24, #25, #28 and #29 (Appendix #1). This, however, overwhelmingly

turned out not to be the case as judged by the respondents' answers. The respondents did not mention a systemic and organised, institutional-wide approach to teaching excellence. As the matter in fact, they have even downplayed existing structures that recognise and rewards excellence in teaching.

There exists a very simple reason for that: University A operates a specific academic staff promotion system that is heavily reliant on research funding success and research publications as a promotion indicator but not on teaching excellence. I became aware of this fact during interview #4, where the respondent, in answering Question #21 gave the following answer:

"I think the university's point of view, although publicly it says, oh yes it supports teaching and blah, blah blah, the [edited: President] has made speeches along those lines…in the end, it is about two things: One is money and it is quite clear that increasingly money is going to be taken from teaching and put into research because in fact university values research much more highly, I think quite wrongly personally. And secondly for individuals in the departments a hugely important thing is promotions and the fact is that people who are good teachers typically do not get promoted to professor and the reason is…{chuckles}… that teaching… to be promoted to professor good teaching does not count, OK. You have to show that you have adequate teaching and even people who are notoriously bad lecturers are allowed to say they are adequate teachers. To be a good teacher involves spending time and that means necessarily you do less research, if you are perceived as a good teacher, I think, there is kind of converse that people assume that you are not good at research. And that can be a problem and people know perfectly well, if you ask somebody to do some teaching they say "I am sorry, I am in for promotion for [edited: lecturer] or professor or something, I do not think I can do this because I know perfectly well if I spend my time on this it will harm my chances of being promoted"… and that is a very, very serious problem which the university needs to address actually."

Respondent #4 is him/herself a professor in University A but I decided to take on his/her account and explore it further. I had the opportunity to do that in interview #12 (see Appendix #6), where the respondent, in answering Question #28 gave me this account:

374 *"again I am not sure how effective they are. The university has a promotion system*
375 *and there is the university [edited: lecturer] route which is supposed to be for people*
376 *who do good teaching and so on. Now, it does seem to me that that route is not used*
377 *as much as it should be because people prefer to go down the research route.*

(and further on I ask him/her:)

385 *"Why is that?*
386 *Well, that is because the university did not want to recognise….when that was set up it*
387 *did not want to explicitly have people who did teaching only.*
388 *OK, is that a long time ago?*
389 *That is quite a long time ago."*

By then it was not clear to me whether this was a university-wide system or whether that was a feature of a particular *Group*. So, during interview #29, the respondent, in answering Question #21, gave me the following account:

"I think first at the individual level, I think university teaching is minor, in this university. Nobody has ever been promoted because he is a good teacher or a brilliant teacher. It is more if your research is good and your teaching is satisfactory... and normally everybody's teaching is satisfactory."
(he/she is then asked to clarify this procedure in relation to previous interviews)…
"When you are promoted there are 3 categories: there is research, there is teaching and there is general administration and even though there are 3 categories, when the promotions committee sit, they will go for promotion on research. Generally speaking... if you have someone who's research is unsatisfactory but he is a brilliant teacher he will not be promoted. It is practice as opposed to..."
Is that something that is written as a statement of the university?
"Oh, no, no, no...I think it is just the way, I think, research universities operate."
(And added):
"In a sense, in the promotions system, it does not necessarily encourage bad teaching, just encourages to minimise your teaching even though no matter how good they are..."

I was not satisfied with this answer and so I pressed on and asked a similar question during interview #11 (Interview Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log) of the additional interviews that I have conducted. In answering Question #28, the respondent gave me the following account:

"The university is schizophrenic in the sense that all of [edited: President's] talks [edited: he/she] talks about how much we value teaching and it is probably true....you know, students come into [edited: University A], come here because it is one of the great places to learn physics, that must be about the teaching because it does not come out of the air, you know, so we have a good reputation in the world for our courses..."
(And added):
"...so we pay a lot of lip-service to teaching and one way or another I think we deliver some very good teaching, we are proud of it and the schizophrenic aspect comes when you ask, well, what you do to encourage good teaching...and, you know, for most staff that comes down to are good teachers promoted... and it is not! I mean you can be the world's best teacher but you are not going past lecturer...even very good lecturers won't get past lecturer unless they also bring in large research...the thing that is key to promotion in this university is bringing in research funding and that is written in all the promotion criteria."
(And added):
"We do not do anything to reward teaching...even teaching fellows... have no career path, absolutely no career path for these people in this university."
(he/she is then asked to clarify this procedure in relation to previous interviews)…
"It is official. I mean, the university went though a painful episode, I can't remember how long ago, over promotional procedures and reformed its promotions..."
Was it years ago?

"Oh, years ago, [edited: Professor's name[2]] is the name to look up if you are ever interested in this, now, it got what I think now really reasonably transparent processes, they are enormously bureaucratic, but what they set out in a transparent way is that you can not get promoted, any promotion from anything, even to [edited: lecturer], without achieving clear performance on all of teaching, administration and research. In practice, getting clear…there are three grades, there is C for clear, S for satisfactory and U for, probably, unsatisfactory. Getting a C for teaching or administration is very easy, almost everyone will get that, and so despite the fact that is all written in the criteria it all comes down to whether you have C under research and you are not allowed under any circumstances to get a C for research if you are not research-active…"

Through this rigorous investigation of the matter starting from a simple account and reaching a conclusive answer as how the promotions system operate and how it came out to be, I managed to identify the very crucial reason why teaching excellence is not pursued by academics in University A. And to be precise (see also below), I am talking about teaching excellence as an academic activity that teaching staff in University A engage with. I am talking about teaching excellence in the way that it was defined by E. Boyer (Boyer 1990) and the way it was further elaborated by the works of C. Kreber (Kreber and Cranton 2000; Kreber 2002b; Kreber 2005). Clearly then, the teaching excellence in the constructs of teaching within University A should be viewed from the stand point of what teachers *do* not what they *produce* because there is no incentive to *produce* teaching excellence.

But is excellent what teaching staff *do* in teaching?

For this I have looked at the list of those awarded a national teaching fellowship in the last 10 years that this scheme is running. Only 3 academics within University A have been awarded a fellowship to date. Of these 3 academics, I managed to get an interview with 2 of them (interview #4 and additional interview #6).

One of the two had this comment in response to Question #18:

"Well, I am a fellow of whatever it is…the academy of whatever…and in fact I won a prize from it ….I have to say it is complete junk, it is completely worthless"

and the other, while recognising the situation within University A as one not promoting excellence in teaching, said:

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[2] mention of this will be in Chapter 4 (Discussion)

"There is a push to promote teaching within the university, it has been an important aspect of work and there are some people who really value their teaching"

and gave a different point of view to the national teaching fellowship by saying:

"There is also a [edited: University A] antibody factor outside...within the higher education [edited: institute], they think that these guys are OK, you know, they've got all the accolades already, so I think it is more difficult to get a prize coming from here"

and went on to suggest:

"*Once they* (i.e. winners from University A) *are received at the higher education [edited: institute], they nearly are not viewed on the same terms as other universities, they maybe expect more perhaps"*

and further on, the same respondent gave a very revealing account of how widely recognised within University A are the national teaching fellowships. Commenting on an approach by another winner of the national teaching fellowships from University A he/she exclaims:

"They did not know about me and I did not know about them, that shows you how low status we are!"

In relation to Skelton's categories where teaching excellence (Skelton 2005, p.35) may be found (see Question #29), the majority of respondents identified category 1 and 4 (i.e. Lectures and *Disputations*, respectively) as teaching practices within University A. Although I will come back to the analysis of responses to this question (Question #29) in the next section, it will suffice for now to say that the responses to this questions identified teaching practices and *not* excellence in teaching practices. I propose that this is in accordance with the university's perspective on teaching that is not regarded as a major promotion factor.

But does the university formally promote quality in teaching?

The answer is yes, University A does formally endorse and reward quality teaching by holding an annual award called '[edited: name] prize' to, in its words:

"honour teaching excellence"

The awards were set up in 1994 by a now deceased member of the university and carry his name. They are publicised by the university and are awarded to a dozen or so (numbers

vary each year) members of the university each year. The persons that are awarded come from different departments or faculties each year and from analysing the results from the previous 10 years, there appears to be an even balance of awardees among the 6 different *Groups* (data not shown). The persons to be awarded the prize have to be nominated by the department or faculty. However, those interviewed draw a different picture of the process, actually playing down the significance and impact of these teaching prizes. For example, in response to Question #28 that was specifically introduced in the research tool (Appendix #1) to identify any rewards on teaching excellence, one respondent replied as follows:

"Within the department we do not have any public recognition of the quality of people's teaching. The university has got a small number of awards it gives each year to the high quality teaching. The department can nominate people for that, but in my view there are not enough of those, it might simply be that there are not enough money to make the awards and I do not think the university rewards teaching nearly enough. It is research that the University rewards, not teaching."
(Interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2)

Another respondent was more precise to his/her response and revealing that the department is doing more to reward teaching than just the university prizes:

"We have got two things: There are these [edited: name] prizes which we nominate people for from time to time and these are nice things to get, and we also have some local money which we recently used to generate what is called a junior faculty teaching award and these are 500[edited: monetary unit] and, you know, a nice letter and aim at the younger members of the department as a kind of CV bolstering thing because there are a lot of fairly junior members probably wanting to move on, you know they have got a [edited: name] fellowship, and that is a way of recognising people who contributed to this department. It is competitive in a sense that we do not have 10 to give out. We, as a teaching committee nominate people for that."
(Interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

Another respondent needed to be reminded of the existence of these prizes:

"Well, probably no.
Do you participate in the [edited: name] prize scheme?
We haven't done but arguably...I am thinking of the couple of first year junior lecturers, who have just arranged...you know, the head of teaching was my predecessor who decided for this...moving language teaching into a lab-based thing, they have done a superb job and maybe I should actually have nominated for them in that...I do not know how to nominate them perhaps you can tell me!"
(Interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

In the majority of the other interviews the mention to these prizes was only in passing or

not at all, whereas in most of the cases where I did not receive an answer about these specific awards I had to ask the respondent about it.

In conclusion, my results show that teaching excellence within University A should not be viewed as what academic staff *produce* but as what they *do*. The element that I need to analyse and I will do that in the next section (section 3.4) is whether what the academic staff *do* can be regarded and should be regarded as excellent. The question that the following section will address is: Is there inherent excellence in the organisational structure or is it excellence perceived by those that are on the receiving end of teaching?

3.4 Sense-making

In this section I will move to a meso-level analysis of my results in an attempt to present an advanced level of analysis of the constructs of teaching found in University A. The issues that this section will explore relate to management of the university's teaching, the conceptualisation of research and teaching excellence in the context of contemporary complexity and demands by external auditing agencies, attitudes towards teaching undergraduate students and the emergent evolution of academic role perception.

I have deliberately named this section 'sense-making' because throughout the progression of the interviews I was taking, I found it increasingly difficult to *make sense* of the responses without invoking a higher order analysis of the data: The responses to crucial issues were largely uniform and this had no correlation to the fact that my respondents were all HoTCs; even interviews with non-HoTCs were turning out similar results. How could there not be any variation in their responses? Even the use of J. Reynold's 4 analytical tools (interpretative repertoires, subject positions, ideological dilemmas and membership categorisation device) (Reynolds 2007) was proving an inefficient means of analysing the data and progressing with the analysis. Reading through the literature and cross-examining the interview transcripts, it was the process of sense-making (Weick

1995; Colville and Pye 2010) that was repeatedly coming up in the interview narratives especially in the issues that are described in this section. As Weick explains:

"The prefix sense in the word sensemaking is mischievous. It simultaneously invokes a realist ontology as in the suggestion that something is out there to be registered and sensed accurately, and an idealist ontology, as in the suggestion that something out there needs to be agreed on and constructed plausibly. The sensible need not be sensable, and therein lies the trouble." (Weick 1995, p. 55):

Respondents were giving me sensible, and very clear, answers on issues that they did not seem to sense accurately but they were feeling that they needed to agree on and construct plausibly. The respondents were employing sense-making while answering several questions of the research tool (Appendix #1) in an attempt to construct and present their reality to me. The trouble was why were both their sensibility and their 'senseability' so invariable? As will be shown below their 'senseability' was only a distinct subunit of their sensibility and in both there was diminished variability.

Therefore, I turned my attention to organisational sense-making, thereby bypassing possible interpretations that may have been possible by the use of Reynolds' analytical tools (Reynolds 2007). For some questions of the research tool (Question #8, #10, #18, #20, #21, #24, #26 and #27, Appendix #1), I used analytical tools to detect the level of sense-making employed by the respondents so as to understand *what takes place* that imparts such lack of variability in the responses and what this tells me, if anything, of the constructions of teaching. If academics in University A have such an invariable sensibility and 'senseability' how does this impact on the constructs of teaching within the university?

Weick describes seven distinguishing characteristics of sense-making that set it apart from other explanatory processes. These are: identity enhancement, retrospect, enactment, social, ongoing, cues and plausibility (Weick 1995, p. 17). These characteristics are shown in parentheses in the following description of what the sense-making process is:

"Once people begin to act (enactment), they generate tangible outcomes (cues) in some context (social) and that helps them discover (retrospect) what is occurring (ongoing), what needs to be explained (plausibility) and what should be done next (identity enhancement)." (Weick 1995, p. 55)

and here is what one respondent answered in response to Question #24 of the research tool (Appendix #1):

"It is eliteness in terms of...it means we get (enactment) a high quality of applicants and unashamedly we work them hard. I think that is common through many of the departments. And I know colleagues in other universities who are saying (social) ...you are lucky (cues) you are teaching...to [edited: university name] and University A they take 1% of the [edited: country] population, so we do not take the very top 1% but we take 1% out of the top 2 and 3 (retrospect) and they say but remember our students come from percentile 15 and 25 (retrospect), it is very different (ongoing), so we have high expectations (plausibility), in fact we won't shy of introducing advanced material (identity enhancement) from the first year for this purpose."
(interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

...and this was not the only example where a respondent's narrative contained the process of sense-making. Sense-making "*is concerned with the way people make bets on 'what is going on' and what to do next by way of (inter)action*" (Colville and Pye 2010, p. 373).

The sense-making process depends on the environment in which such bets operate. For example, in this particular case study the environment is University A, an organisation that operates within a fluctuating higher education environment constantly receiving cues and having to respond or adjust. University A is therefore constantly involved, individually and interactively, in a process of sense-making by betting on the possible answers to the questions 'what is going on here?' (Colville and Pye 2010). Being an elite institution does not mean that it wins all its 'bets' but it does mean that it puts up (it constructs) environment-sensing mechanisms and designs (constructs) to increase the odds in its favour in an uncertain world and unknowable future. So, "*if the design maintains or strengthens these resources* (the seven properties of sense-making), *then people will be able to continue making sense of what they face. If the design undermines or weakens these resources, there is a corresponding question about the organizational form that coordinates their activities*" (Weick 2001, p. 463; Colville and Pye 2010, p. 374).

The question that emerges then is what are the constructs of teaching that enable University A to engage in 'betting and winning its bets'?

Some questions of the research tool (Question #8, #10, #18, #20, #21, #24, #26 and #27, Appendix #1) were designed to provide data that will answer this question. To illustrate this clearly I place the question number (Appendix #1) right next to each of the characteristics of sense-making as follows:

"Once people begin to act (enactment, Q. #8), they generate tangible outcomes (cues, Q. #27) in some context (social, Q. #21) and that helps them discover (retrospect, Q. #10) what is occurring (ongoing, Q. #24), what needs to be explained (plausibility, Q. #26) and what should be done next (identity enhancement Q. #20)." (Weick 1995, p. 55)

A typical enactment was presented, for example, in interview #12 (see Appendix #6) where the respondent, in answering Question #8 gave me this account:

116 "At the end of every term the teaching committee would look at the student feedback
117 and will ask: are the courses we are giving to the students doing what they are
118 supposed to do? Are there problems? If there are problems, how do we fix that? So, it
119 has not just a management role in deciding....I mean the other role is deciding on
120 changes to the [edited: part of the] course, to change what we are teaching in the
121 modules and things like that. So there is a management function but there is also a
122 quality assurance function."

Most other respondents narrated very similar accounts and it is important to note that their 'enactments' offered a very distilled -the bare essentials- version of the terms of references of the teaching committees. The narrated 'enactments' are the result of how the university handles quality assurance agencies and external examiners. With the advent of quality assurance procedures and course accreditations by professional bodies, teaching committees find themselves increasingly accountable to external examiners or accreditation agencies rather than teaching quality agencies. Such 'cues' were clearly documented in interview #1 Transcript (Appendix #2):

"I think that the one external body that we pay a lot of attention to is the external examiners. Every year we have 3 external examiners, they are chosen to be senior figures from the [edited: name] group of universities, people we regard as being at our level. And if they say they do not like something we take it very seriously because our aim is to make sure that we are doing things in a way that is comparable with the top rank universities in this country. If [edited: teaching quality] says [edited: discipline] should have more social contacts, well they.....they are not in a position to do that."

Thus teaching committees quickly prioritise importance in their responses and do what is required of them but they do so in a barely minimum effort. So, if the teaching quality

audit asks that student feedback is gathered and used to improve teaching provisions, then the outcome ('cue') is:

"...so, we get this feedback but it is not treated uncritically by us, we compare it with what we think is right. But there are quite a lot of things that have changed over the years in response to feedback..."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

...and the context 'social' where this outcome takes place is summarised succinctly in the following quotes:

"Well, we have to pay lip service to being happy with what the people above have...and if they say anything sensible we try to carry it through, if they do not, then we try and minimise the damage the policy is causing while adhering to the letter of them."
(interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

...and

285 "Well, at the grassroots level, most people are happy to do their teaching and so on...
286 what they are more reluctant to do is spend a lot of time developing new teaching
287 practices, developing new courses and things like that, you know, people will happily
288 do their teaching, the teaching that is allotted to them, but they are not prepared to
289 spend their time thinking about the more strategic aspects..."
(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

...and

"...policy within the wider higher education area, funding is really associated with research. And teaching, although people say it is important, because it brings less money, it takes second place."

and continues:
"They have gone through the motions...my own jaded view of this is: yeah, they have got rules, they have got standards, I go along with this, I comply, I make sure that I do everything they need me to do...and again it is very anecdotal that the university has approached the quality assurance of undergraduate teaching in a similar way."
(interview #6 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

The narratives demonstrate an emphasis on research whereas everything that has to do with teaching quality assurance and teaching provisions receives barely minimum attention as long as there is compliance of the academic staff with the teaching that they have to do.

Quality assurance agencies and external examiners, by demanding annual quality statements and conducting audits, instil the belief that teaching quality should be taken seriously and teaching provisions should adhere to the highest possible standards. In other words, HoTCs discover (retrospect) that teaching committees are very important in

maintaining lines of communications with the auditing agencies under the current climate where universities are held accountable to auditing agencies. It is the teaching quality auditing agencies that make the management of teaching provisions an important operation in University A. The impact that auditing agencies have had is narrated in the following quote:

"We had a [edited: audit agent] in 1998, and that was the ultimate teaching quality assurance, now…it is one of the silly things, in a way, because it sets you up and measures you against your own statement of what you did, typical sort of thing…and everyone got 23 or 24…. and I was not involved at the time, I observed from the distance and it seemed to me that that really pushed, that made departments across the university take teaching much more seriously, they had to….and I think that was necessary because I think teaching was very undervalued, I know this conflicts with what I said that teaching isn't very valuable, you know, and you can have fun attacking that, but it is still…although I do not think it makes much difference I still think it is worthwhile and I think we have to do it as well as we can because it is [edited: University A]"
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

and this is why respondent #12 (see Appendix #6) replies to Question #10 (Appendix #1) as follows:

133 "To your judgement, what is the actual importance of the teaching committee?
134 Would the department do without it?
135 Not, for now!"

indicating that in the current climate where teaching quality is taken very seriously and regulated by governmental or non-governmental agencies, the existence of a teaching committee is absolutely necessary. However, the way the management of teaching is enacted within University A is left within the university as an organisation to decide. The university as an organisation has to discover how to operate under the scrutiny of the quality assurance agencies and, being a research-intensive university, adopts an approach of minimal interference with teaching arrangements.

Theoretically, this is what would have been expected since Weick (see also Weber 2005; Weick *et al.* 2005) proposes that the relationship between institutional (audit agencies) sense-making and corporate (university) sense-making is not linear. In other words, the university's sense-making vocabulary tends to be triggered by the audit agency, but the audit agency has less influence over what happens subsequent to triggering (Weick

et al. 2005). Local adaptations that take place ensure that University A having put quality assurance procedures in place, (i.e. student feedback, teaching committees, quality statements) will operate a policy of minimal compliance. The university as an organisation understands that teaching quality procedures are essential and should be institutionalised but it offers a minimal response as narrated below:

"*So you think that quality procedures are in general a good thing?*
I think they are, I think this university is actually very good at minimising the impact of the response to quality issues. On individual departments it is pretty minimal. The thing that is I think incredibly valuable out of all of them is the review of individual institutions, which I have been on a number of those, 2 or 3 of them as chair, and I have seen them all on the education committee and my view is that those reviews are very valuable, most institutions take...respond rather positively to them. I did one recently in an institution remain nameless but they simply could not understand what is it about and it was like pulling someone's teeth to try and get them to look at what they were doing, I mean these are largely about making the institution look at what it is doing, and this institution refused to look itself at what it was doing. It just thought that all it had to do was tick the boxes, it was very unsatisfactory..."
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

and this approach to teaching review procedure is reflected in the following comment by a HoTC:

"One of the members of the committee said: we really act as a mirror so you can reflect on your teaching"
(interview #29 transcript, Appendix #2)

Question #24 of the research tool (Appendix #1) attempted to identify what is occurring ('ongoing') in University A that makes society consider it as elite. The response of those interviewed was unequivocal. For the HoTCs and all others interviewed the quality of the students was what makes University A elite. This was an extremely critical point because those interviewed were 'mirroring and reflecting' the organisation's projected image to its clientele thereby initiating a sense-making line of thought (characteristic), on what is actually occurring, away from them. The excellent quality of teaching was denied and in its place the excellent quality of students was asserted. Respondents' narratives to what is occurring ('ongoing') (Question #24) ranged from very descriptive to very vivid but were all congruent about the quality of the students:

"...we have good students and we do not shy away from making it difficult for them. Whereas if you were in another university where you did not have such good students and you were worried about recruitment and so on you perhaps might treat them in a different way. So, I think that what it means to be an elite university from a teaching point of view. I think the status is connected to this thing about primary research being the primary activity but I would not say it lowers status and I do not think it causes a difficulty for the teaching committee."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

"We are turning out students who are a lot broader than would be normally, than what other universities would be able to do because they got a lot more knowledge in other fields something that we could not do given what is in [edited: entrance exams] unless we had a high quality of students. It is the students."
(interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2)

"The other I suppose is partly enabled by the standards of our students, because we do have highly motivated, serious students, by the time they reach their [edited: number] year we can begin to address issues that elsewhere will be dealt with at Master's level"
(interview #10 transcript, Appendix #2)

333 "Well, it affects it in all sorts of very subtle ways, I think. I think that as an elite
334 university we get some very good students and I think that when you have very good
335 students you have to be able to stretch some of those students you have to teach at a
336 high level in order not to bore the students and turn them off the subjects. So that is
337 one thing: we have got good students."
(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

"Of course, it is an elite university, you get very, very good students. And, in a sense, they can survive without the teaching because they are very good and they are very motivated...most of them are very motivated"
(interview #24 transcript, Appendix #2)

"We are elite because we can select very best students in a teaching-context way...We are elite in a research-context because in any measure, you know, Shanghai or Times or whatever we come up in top [edited: scores]. So, you know, I do not have to justify why we are elite, the figures I think show it. The impact on us for teaching is that we get the best students. That of course makes it more enjoyable to teach. So perhaps we have less resistance to teaching in University A than you would have in many other institutions. Most people still understand that this is a pipeline from elite students coming in after school, to who becomes a PhD student and goes on to become the next lecturer. So we are all fully invested in that pipeline. I repeat what I said before that the quality of our teaching makes much difference to the quality of our students, they come in good and....as long as we can keep them gainfully employed for 3 or 4 years...they will leave good as well. Our job is to keep them gainfully employed for 3 or 4 years."
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

the same respondent few minutes later described the students as follows:

"Good students come here and find that they have complete freedom to develop themselves and to push themselves as hard as they want and as a consequence these students go an amazing distance in a few years. They come in good and they leave fabulous."
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"Overall their performance is just about the best I have ever since, by the end of [edited: number] years, the ones that have graduated having done [edited: Course name] here they are absolutely superb.
What makes them superb?
I think that ...they do need to be academically bright, there is an awful lot of stuff they need to know in [edited: discipline]....we probably admit people with higher academic qualifications. They need to be motivated to do it."
(interview #13 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

and he/she also stated:

"I think University A students are very, very competitive....(edited).....and sometimes that causes them difficulties when they come to [edited: discipline], when they might not be the leader of the team, they might be in a team being led by a [edited: less qualified], that is very hard for them, I think.
This competitiveness that you mentioned, is it something that is instilled in them while they are here?
And before...I think. They have all been the very best at their school academically. And they have been hot-housed through their school, whichever school they have been, and then they come here. It sort of raises up the level."
(interview #13 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

and he/she provided the following account:

"...I have an interesting story on that...(and he/she narrates to me a recent comment by a student of University A, who has a girlfriend studying also the same discipline in another university, about the life of students in the other university)... *he said: "They do not know as much as we know, but they are much nicer to each other"."*
(interview #13 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"It is about being competitive, that is why they are motivated. They are very competitive and they hate to be wrong. They love to be patronising and some of them study a lot to be able to patronise other people."
(interview #5 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"It is a very interesting question because I think that they are students that are different anyway. They are already high achievers long before they arrive in University A. So, they are kids that are going to achieve wherever you set them. Having said that, you have a unique bunch of students basically, ready to push themselves, who do not like failure and are very, very savvy about what to do to succeed. Enormous amount of kind of guild knowledge amongst the student body about which to pick and what's easier and how to get good marks so that's that and then of course the essay a week, I mean you can not beat it."
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

and while referring to *disputations*, he/she exclaims:

"A very, very powerful pedagogical model, isn't it? 'cause remember, they are students who can deal with it, they are high achievers in the first place"

and comments:

"Of course, they have to get the best results in the country to get in"

and gives that account about the students of University A:

"When you follow their careers when they come down from [edited: University A], I mean, there is just no doubt about it, they go on achieving, whatever organisation they join....they rise, because they are those kind of kids...Nothing to do with [edited: University A], that's because that's what they are"
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

Respondent #33 gave a very elaborate account of the kind of students, that are admitted and graduate from University A, essentially suggesting that it is personality traits of these students that make them high achievers irrespective of the university education they receive. The unanimous belief in the quality of the students suggests that academics of University A, have a stratified view of what teaching can impart to the students, almost to the point to suggest that the better the students are, the less the teaching they need. Therefore putting out a '*tough*' course, in which such students are bound to succeed, allows them to have '*less resistance*' to teaching. I propose that if excellence in teaching was high in their agenda, and the quality of the students was not overshadowing their views, then their sense-making process in response to what needs to be explained (Q. #26 (plausibility)) about teaching in University A would have been different. Instead the responses to Question #26, Appendix #1) were either ones of not identifying any emphasis they need to place on teaching or recognising a problem but not providing a remedial approach to it. In response to Question #26 none of the respondents gave a framework of plausible explanations in what they do about their teaching:

"We are basically in a position to assume that they have done very well, that they are highly motivated, they want to be here basically and we sort of start with that assumption. Whereas you can imagine that if you had not such good students and with not such motivation you will have to teach them in a different way basically."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

"it is true that the intrinsic quality of the students that we get is very high, but equally the level of preparation they have, the level of technical preparation doing science degrees is declining and in my particular subject in [edited: discipline] which is intrinsically a mathematical subject there is no longer any mathematics in [edited: high school] so students often come here with very misguided ideas of what [edited: discipline] is actually about and perceive in [edited: discipline] as a purely descriptive subject as opposed to a quantitative mathematical subject and the level of their sort of mathematical fluency and preparedness is actually quite a problem for us and their ability to analytically think about

problems is not what it was because the style in which it is taught in schools has changed and we have to respond to that, it is continually changing"
(interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2)

"The student quality means that we can…go quite fast over the material and with the backup of [edited: disputations] it means that some of the teaching can be backed up by that."
(interview #3 transcript, Appendix #2)

346 "Well, there is always an argument on what you actually mean by teaching and
347 learning. Now, anecdotally, my colleagues and I grumble more and more every year
348 about the fact that the students want to be taught rather than learn for themselves.
349 And we blame collectively the [edited: high school] system for formulating a type of
350 learning which students get used to, in other words they are told: learn these facts,
351 these subjects and you will have success in your [edited: exams] and you will get into
352 a good university and what we are trying to do in University A…what we should be
353 trying to do… is say to the students: now, actually, here are subjects that you can
354 explore for yourself, we will give you the basic information that will enable you to
355 understand how to get into the subject. But you should then develop your habits of
356 independent studying. And that is very difficult at the moment. The good students will
357 do it, but the less good students…
358 That is what I was going to ask you: Do the students in general cope with that?
359 Many of the less good students do struggle with this type of approach."
(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

"Not at all, we expect all students to be of a standard…to some extent if there is any remedial teaching to be done that is the job of the [edited: disputations] to do that. Our view is we have a course to teach and we teach….remember that in this university the university gives lectures, sets exams and awards degrees"
(interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

"I think we are trying to build an awareness of how difficult the university is in the first few weeks… for kids from disadvantaged background."
(interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2)

Their sense-making process runs its circle by providing an identity enhancement that favours the current approach of the university's central offices towards management and supervision of its teaching: Teaching reviews, annual quality statements, amendments in response to institution-wide audits are generally understood to be a positive activity.

Academics realise that the policies and procedures that assure good teaching practices are gradually embedding a culture of dissemination of good practice, of improving standards in teaching quality, gradually giving value to the notion that good teaching should be rewarded and promoted. So their response to what should be done next (identity

enhancement Q. #20) comes as a gradual realisation of the importance they need to place on teaching, good teaching:

"...I am just involved recently in one of these [edited: teaching] reviews of teaching and although we are in the middle of this, I think that these are quite useful in terms of just sharing good practice, I mean, I feel I am learning quite a lot by doing these reviews for our department, I am seeing things that they are doing that we could do, there is a chance to find what resources other departments are devoting to teaching compared to ours. These sort of things is not always easy to find in this sort of place. I think more sharing of information would be helpful....if your interest is teaching you talk to the colleagues in other departments and you learn how they do things...but I am not sure if this needs to be formal as it is very much informal."
(interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2)

273 "Well, I...think that the university going forward probably has to face up to the
274 realisation that it is going to have to reward people for excellence in teaching
275 something like as it already rewards people for excellence in research and I think that
276 that realisation is dawning in the heart of the university
277 But it is not there yet?
278 It is not there yet as an embedded culture, but it is something that will have to come,
279 you know, we now have a promotion system which is geared very much to research
280 excellence but I think that there needs to be some sort of parallel tract or cognitive
281 tract if you like, that will reward dedication in teaching or dedication to
282 improvement."
(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

"They are missing an opportunity, in my view, the problem is that institutions they do not spot that this is primarily an opportunity for an institution to reflect on itself, and they think that they are ticking boxes for someone outside, and I think across the university in general, and certainly within the education [edited: office], it is understood that this is the least important function..."
"The other quality think, putting the annual quality statement or whatever, well in fact the education [edited: office] is quite sensitive to it as a result of the last [edited] audit and their recommendations to the university as a whole, they have simplified the process and trying to make that more straightforward."
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

Respondents' comment to what should be done next (identity enhancement Q. #20) also comes as a gradual realisation that they need to comply with the university's directives on quality assurance policies and procedures in pragmatic, substantial terms. Quite revealing of this trend is the following quote from a person who sits on the university's teaching committee and has a less stratified vantage point of view:

"....I think we were wasting a lot of effort and I think we had no idea of what we were doing, or how we were doing it or why we were doing it until the [edited: audit agent]. We were just on auto-pilot, we have always done it this way, we are always going to do it that

way, the [edited: audit agent] changed the mindset and that has since been enforced by the quality procedures put in place to keep the [edited: another audit agent]"
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

The above analysis of interview transcripts, using a tiered method that identifies the sense-making process of academics in University A, revealed that when it comes to teaching, there is nothing excellent about what these academics *do*. Central to their sense-making process is the belief that students' quality is excellent. This belief creates a system of committee membership and informal mediation to fend for the ever-increasing demand for accountability, quality auditing and government statistics. To paraphrase Weick's description of the sense-making process (Weick 1995, p. 55) in the University A's context:

"Once University A *begin to* manage its teaching provisions by setting up teaching committees that quickly prioritise the importance of issues *(enactment),* these committees *generate tangible outcomes (cues)* such a paperwork that comply with imposed regulations *in some context* that is heavily in favour of research and therefore has to offer minimum compliance *(social) and that helps them discover (retrospect)* that they only need to hold teaching arrangements together under an acceptable management. Because they affirm that *what is occurring* is that the quality of the students is excellent *(ongoing), what needs to be explained (plausibility)* is very little in the way of promoting good teaching, but adopting teaching quality reviews and supporting the current regulations is *what should be done next (identity enhancement)."*

The biggest (sense-making: 'what is going on here?' (Colville and Pye 2010)) bet that University A places is on the quality of the students and makes every effort, by accepting highly-achieving (Appendix #5) students in a very competitive and stringent admissions ratio (Appendix #4), to win this bet.

Winning this particular bet is at the crux of its elite identity:

- Management of change in the open higher education system by creation of committee memberships and informal systems of discussion and mediation is another construct that assumes teaching efficiency.
- Intensive *Courses*, where research excellence is the added value, are another construct, an image-bolstering construct, that attracts clientele. By engaging highly problematised research into a highly un-problematised teaching, University A ensures that students are kept up to pace with scientific change.

• *Disputations*, the distinctive pedagogical tool of University A, are the construct that operates as a safety net. It minimises course complexity and ensures that every bet (student) is won every time.

• Personalised matriculations with small staff/student ratios and supportive tuitions ensure that the 'pipeline' prospect, (see page 97), i.e. an undergraduate student, becoming the next Ph.D. student and subsequently becoming a future University A lecturer, will increase evolutionary stability and reduce environmental complexity.

Such a design maintains and strengthens the sense-making process and so the academic community of University A is able to continue making sense of what they face and do not question the organisational form that coordinates their activities (Weick 2001, p. 463; Colville and Pye 2010, p. 374). Changes in teaching constructs are more often responded to than initiated. The reasonable degree of stability and order to such complex system of teaching constructs (see section 3.2) means that outcomes of change cannot be predicted so change is *not* to be initiated. Responses are perceived as subtle and incremental adjustments rather than overhauling reforms and so even first-order changes are perceived as inconsequential (Boyce 2003). The relationship between the quality of students and the quality of the constructs is not a matter of fact, but the organisational culture has made the quality of the students part of an institutionalised myth (Meyer and Rowan 1977) that is part of the symbolic system that defines this university's reality (Birnbaum 1989).

The question is then what is the relationship between the constructs of teaching and the identity of institutional governance of University A?

3.5 Cybernetic

To identify the relationship between the constructs of teaching and the identity of institutional governance of University A, I move to a mega-level of analysis and try to identify implicit meanings, identities and functions in interview transcripts and the archival data as a whole.

I have grouped responses to Questions #5, #6, #7 and #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #16, #27, #31, #9 and #3 (see Appendix #1) together to identify issues on regulation, control and communication *within* the teaching constructs. I have also grouped responses to Questions #17, #19, #22 and #23 together to identify issues on regulation, control and communication across the adaptations of the teaching constructs in the various departments or faculties. Finally, I have also grouped responses to Questions #18, #20 and #21 together to identify issues on regulation, control and communication at the intersection of the university's constructs of teaching with the national and international higher education environment. Analysis of each of these groups of responses was done in conjunction with university's audit reports, different teaching committee minutes, analysis of annual quality statements and university's reports or responses to its institutional audit.

Analysis of the respondent's narratives showed that the organisation, management and implementation of the constructs of teaching within the university was accomplished through elaborate sets of checks and balances in a self-correcting fashion through mechanisms and lines of communication that were set up to monitor organisational functions, provide negative feedback and attention cues to participants (academic staff, administrators, disputation teachers, HoTCs, LoPs) when things were going not well. For example, negative feedback by the students (Question #27) will be dealt as:

"…*you know, I did that last year, you have a quiet word with somebody and saying: this is not a formal complaint, but it will be nice…the students are saying this and could you just try and….things like that"*
(interview #19 transcript, Appendix #2)

or the teaching methods of a member of staff (Question #13) will be dealt as:

"... so we do not really have an influence at that level of detail, you are only getting involved then if things are starting to go wrong and there have been occasions where we were very unhappy with the way certain courses have been delivered by certain people"
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

These processes of paying attention to details when negative feedback loops are reporting that something was going unacceptably wrong, or having sensing mechanisms that collectively monitor changes from acceptable levels of functioning are congruent with cybernetic controls of the organisational system (Birnbaum 1989). Using an allegoric tale, Birnbaum proposes that the cybernetic paradigm posits that organisational control systems monitor changes from acceptable levels of functioning and that activates forces that return the institutions to their previous stable state (Birnbaum 1989, p. 239). Under cybernetic governance, improvements (Question #16) in the teaching constructs are seen as reactions to something going not well (not necessarily *going wrong*), not to be done when things are going well:

"We might do... but... it is not really our sort of thing."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

The overriding impression from the responses to questions #12 to #16 was that teaching committees seemed to run themselves and, in general, the management of the constructs of teaching was operated at the level of negative feedback loops and responses to disruptions:

"We were just on auto-pilot, we have always done it this way, we are always going to do it that way,"
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

and so respondent's accounts about their role conflict and experiences of conflicting demands (Question # 22) were *unanimously* echoed in the following lines:

"No, I mean...but I have often been on the faculty board...I have not found that to be a conflict no, but I have a kind of representation to the university."
(interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2)

Responses to institutional quality audit are rigorously processed and dealt by upper level participants such as the administration office for teaching (AOT) in close collaboration with the HoTC and the LoP. Analysing two annual quality statements from two different departments showed that, invariably, responses were adjustments and

additions to an already existing template document rather than attempts to change ongoing activities:

"...I think this university is actually very good at minimising the impact of the response to quality issues. On individual departments it is pretty minimal."
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

This may be seen as creating an overwhelming burden on administrators (LoPs) that have already an extensive list (see page 53) of roles to play but these roles are a vital part of the cybernetic governance of an academic system. As Birnbaum points out:

"administrators should complicate themselves and use multiple frames to develop richer behavioral repertoires, increase the sensitivity of institutional monitoring systems, and focus attention on important issues through systems that report data and create forums for interaction." (Birnbaum 1989, p. 239)

and this is precisely enacted by, among a myriad of other activities, assigning the job of a LoP to one administrator in every department or faculty, having direct interactions with the AOT and each department in preparation and the aftermath of an institutional audit (narrated in interview #1 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

"We do have the [edited: university's] teaching and learning reviews...and they try to do them just before the [edited: professional audit agency] visit...so you were worked up..."
(interview #13 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

and reporting through the education committee about the monitoring of upcoming issues regarding changes in institutional audit:

"The committee noted that the [edited: national quality audit agency] would be consulting on a new framework for audit in the new year and that the Government's response to the [edited: interim] report was due shortly; generally, reaction to it had not been positive."
(education committee minutes)

Responses to teaching quality assurance audits is taken seriously but activity is concentrated at the upper levels of the organisation and does not reach the teaching committees:

244 "we are also beholden to the [edited: national quality audit agency]. We are
245 subservient to what they require as well,"
(but then added)
249 "But as far as the [edited: teaching quality agency] goes, then we will go through the

250 [edited: AOT].”
(interview #12 transcript, Appendix #6)

and the implementation of teaching quality assurance procedures was perceived by HoTCs to be a positive development that helped improve the quality of teaching, for example:

“Over the last 30 years there has been an improvement in the worst teaching, you see what I mean, as a result of that. There used to be some very, very, very bad lecturers and it was shocking that this was allowed to continue”
(interview #4 transcript, Appendix #2)

Birnbaum suggests that the cybernetic system of governance functions effectively…

“if environmental disturbances are sensed, and negative feedback is then generated by organizational submits that monitor these data. The cybernetic leader ensures that appropriate monitoring devices are in place, and that information is generated that will be reviewed by these monitors.” (Birnbaum 1989, p. 249).

and this appears to be exactly the case in University A, for example:

“We have members of the department who were formal assessors of [edited: national quality audit agency] so we have experience of that, we also have a number of members of the department who are external examiners who look at teaching practices of other universities but this is all very informal”
(interview #29 transcript, Appendix #2)

University A understands that it is worth to invest in developing analytical approaches to critical institutional issues such as quality of teaching and, therefore, maintains and supports a centre that is called Office for Teaching Technology (OTT). The mission of OTT is to provide technical and scientific support to the academic staff of University A on any issues pertaining to teaching, as well as carry out its own research projects on higher education teaching (interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log). Students and academics of University A extensively use the technology offered by OTT, but in a true cybernetic regulatory fashion as described by Birnbaum:

“The benefits may not be so much in terms of alternatives studied, outcomes examined, and cost-benefit calculations made explicit (although these may be of value) as much as in both providing cues that symbolize to the organization the importance of a problem, and developing forums for analysis that bring people together and therefore alter their behaviors and eventually their attitudes” (Birnbaum 1989, p. 251)

The symbolic importance of different voices concerned about university teaching and contacting the OTT which, in turn, provides a forum for analysis is conveyed in the following comment made by the Head of OTT:

"I think we see some of the discontents, I think I should call them more like principal dissidents, in that they may teach in a different way, they may have different views about teaching based on a particular position or stance or experience or prior commitment they had"
(interview #2 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

But can cybernetic theory explain the congruent response to Question #24 (Appendix #1) that University A is elite because it gets good students? Can it explain the 'mirroring and reflecting' effect (Alvesson and Robertson 2006)? In a cybernetic system (Ashby 1956; Conant and Ashby 1970; Steinbruner 1974; Birnbaum 1989) each of its subsystems responds to a limited number of *inputs* and these responses monitor their operation and make corrections and adjustments as necessary (Birnbaum 1989). Organisational responses are *not* based upon measuring or improving their output but monitoring and minimising the *variety* of the input (Birnbaum 1989). One of the founders of management cybernetics, R. Ashby (Ashby 1956; Conant and Ashby 1970) proposed the theory of requisite variety which posits that: "*The variety in the outcomes* [added: of a system], if minimal, *can be decreased further only by a corresponding increase in that of the R* [added: regulator of the system]" (Ashby 1956, p. 207). Put more plainly: "*variety can destroy variety*" (Ashby 1956, p. 207) or *"if you want to make sense of a complex world, you've got to have an internal system that is equally complex."* (K. E. Weick).

According to Ashby (Ashby 1956, p. 207), if V_D is the variety of all the disturbances *D (inputs)* in any system, and V_R is the variety of the responses of the regulator of the system *(R),* and V_O is the variety of the outcomes, then it must always be $V_O \geq V_D - V_R$. So, if V_D is given and fixed, $V_D - V_R$ can be lessened only by a corresponding increase in V_R. In other words, *only variety in R* (regulator) *can force down the variety due to D* (input). Let's put this into context: University A exists in an environment of ever-increasing complexity not only as regards its teaching but also its research, its public profile and its position as a

leading research organisation. The variety of the inputs it receives on a day-to-day basis is enormous and, according to the law of requisite variety, in order to regulate well it has to put up an *equally* enormous variety of responses. And if statistics are anything to go by, it regulates very well: its variety is enormous.

Therefore, if we use the law of requisite variety, as documented (Lengnick-Hall and Sanders 1997, p. 1336), and call (*I*) the environmental inputs to a system (in the case of University A, its students), (*S*) the system (in this case, the constructs of teaching) and, (*O*) the desired outcomes (in this case, consistent, high levels of learning, behavioural intentions, reported satisfaction, career prospects), and *V* is the amount of variety, then Ov $\geq$ *Iv- Sv* (Lengnick-Hall and Sanders 1997, p. 1336). This means that individual variety among students must be met by equally variant constructs of teaching if consistent, high-quality outcomes are to be had. Inversely, since University A students have *reportedly* very reduced variety (see Appendix #5) and are considered very good by all the respondents (i.e. reduced performance variety), for the system to have consistent, high-quality outcomes, it must exhibit very small (almost lack of) variety in the constructs of teaching. In other words, if consistently high outcomes are to be expected, teaching is not to be a major preoccupation of the academics, changes that will inadvertently increase the variety should not be introduced or when asked for they should, through mediation (i.e. teaching committees), be toned down. And this justifies the logic behind the following quote:

"...I think university teaching is minor, in this university..."
(interview #4 transcript, Appendix #2)

Therefore, if University A wants its students to continue…
"come in good and they leave fabulous"
(interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log)

…then it must do anything to tone down the variety in its constructs of teaching.

When it comes to the constructs of teaching, that lack of variety is another, the final, construct of teaching that I identified in University A.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Overview

My case study research, through trying to identify what constructs of teaching are to be found in an elite university, explored the axial relations between institutional agency and human agency against four different contexts: management, change, complexity and evolution. I have answered my specific research questions (see page 38) by engaging with the intrinsic connections, overlaps and ramifications of the three theoretical frameworks that my research was based upon: the organisational analytical framework on system coupling proposed by K. Weick, the institutional analytical framework on change within higher education institutions and knowledge creation and use by higher education institutions provided by B. Clark and the epistemological analytical framework of R. Barnett on 'performative knowledge' and the future of higher education.

More specifically, the organisational analytical framework offered me ways to explore issues on system management, cybernetic control, system complexity and structural coupling within a higher education institution. The institutional analytical framework offered me ways to explore issues on knowledge and teaching constructs' management, change and response to environmental complexity. The epistemological analytical propositions of R. Barnett run axially throughout my thesis offering ways of perceiving system's evolution, perils and organisational response to system's evolution. My results show that University A is a loosely-coupled system of cybernetic controls that generates complexity to respond to environmental complexity while trying to minimise variety of its intake (students) and responds to demands for change in a subtle and incremental manner.

In the following sections of this chapter I will discuss my results in relation to the four different contexts (complexity, management, change, evolution) and show that regarding

its undergraduate teaching, University A behaves as a cybernetic system (Birnbaum 1989) that puts emphasis on system inputs that generate a circular process of sense-making (Weick 1995) which, in turn, minimises variety in the constructs of teaching.

4.2 Complexity

The case study research, presented in this thesis, investigated the constructions of teaching of a research-intensive, elite university. This university ranks high in international university rankings and publicity material of its research, its teaching and its history is widespread and diverse. My case study sought not to justify any historical context and national adaptations. Therefore, I chose to analyse the university's approach to its undergraduate teaching from a contemporary and international perspective while concealing its identity.

My results show that regarding its undergraduate teaching, University A is a system of cybernetic controls (Birnbaum 1989) with emphasis on system inputs that generate a circular process of sense-making (Weick 1995) which, in turn, minimises variety in the constructs of teaching. Unique constructs of teaching (such as *disputations* and *Courses*) do exist, but mechanisms that stifle variation within the system gain more importance for the university's identity than its constructs of teaching.

In most of the cases, respondents in my interviews came across as having bounded rationality and acute social stratification with rich behavioural but desensitised interpretative repertoires. The respondents to my interviews came across as having bounded rationality not because they used similar simplifications. The structure of the organisation did not allow them to simplify their points of view in a similar way. They knew well, for example, about the structure of their own department or faculty but the departmental context was different from the one next door: different discipline, different history, different symbols, an almost different world. Their actions were moderately dependent on those of their neighbours (Weick 2001, p. 387). They would focus on small

and different portions of rational reality, for example when they responded to Question #31 about how professionally and personally rewarding is their role as HoTC (Appendix #1), or, for example (see section 3.2) when they were narrating the promotions system of the university. As Weick suggests (Weick 2001, p. 387), bounded rationality results into the existence of multiple realities and that was reinforced in the respondents by the limited accountability they expressed (Question #17, Appendix #1).

The undergraduate teaching structures are extremely complex with 'Leviathans and Dwarfs' co-inhabiting the same structure and maintaining complex lines of communication (Figures 1-4). When it comes to teaching, these lines of communication run in a very short circuit so much so that what happens into one department or in one discipline has hardly any effect on the rest of the organisation. However, across the organisation, when it comes to sensing the environment and acting as a result of environmental input, enactment is prominent and causes looser coupling between the organisational subunits (Weick 2001, p. 387). It is the university's environment-sensing 'devices' which are sensitive enough to ensure that some other part of its system will detect the 'noise' or sense undesirable developments and bring them to the attention of the upper levels of the organisation. These upper levels will, then, act in a prominent way and cause looser coupling to the system. Prominence does not mean task specifications and harsh sanctions for incompliance. It means that the more loosely-coupled the system becomes the more an action, taken by the university to make a change in one department or in one *Course*, is unlikely to be detected or affect other departments or *Courses*. As Birnbaum observes (Birnbaum 1989), allocating the achievement of specific goals to loosely-coupled subunits is what permits a university to respond to its many ill-defined and often conflicting purposes, and at the same time provides the simplification (see page 106, section 3.5) required for administrative action (Birnbaum 1989, p. 246).

Prominence also implies reliance on well-developed feedback channels that inform the organisation about the environment and prompt it to action. Actions should be justified by

the significance of the informants outside of the organisation (Meyer and Rowan 1977). As narrated in responses to Question #18, external examiners of equal academic level and professional agencies gain special importance as feedback channels but data for which no focussed feedback channels exists remain unattended and not part of any decision making process. Dependence on externally fixed institutions maintains stability (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Therefore, incorporating externally legitimated formal structures and using external assessment criteria can enable the organisation to remain successful by social definition, buffering it from failure (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Institutional isomorphism is promoted and so is the move toward the status in society of a subunit rather than an independent system. The end result is legitimacy both cognitive and procedural. And what transpires is that response and change can appear slow because it is based on extensive examination of what was found in the past to be effective and not based on rational assessment of alternatives.

Birnbaum suggests (Birnbaum 1989) that this is part of a cybernetic organisation aiming to decrease variance in its system. For Birnbaum (Birnbaum 1989), in a cybernetic system it is not important to understand why any new behaviour had the observed consequences (measured as change) and to understand the internal interactions that lead to the desired outcomes. This is why responses to Question #20 were characterised by a limited interpretative repertoire with one respondent even saying: *"The university's policies on teaching...um?..oh...I am not sure I can comment on that!"* (interview #3 transcript, Appendix #2). To my understanding this is one example of how loose coupling increases when cognitive complexity decreases (Weick 2001, p. 387).

This elite university has a vast array of the characteristics attributed to loosely-coupled systems (Weick 1976, p. 5-8). From absence of regulations (see section 3.2) to end result convergence (see section 3.4), and from dampened coordination through system (see section 3.3) to tight networks with slow feedback times (see section 3.2) (Weick 1976, p. 5-8). All embedded in a rich repertoire of symbolism and rituals (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

Interestingly, one of the functions of loosely-coupled systems is that such a system makes more room available for self-determination by actors (Weick 1976, p. 5-8). This self-determination sometimes manifests itself as 'academic freedom' or as obtaining and maintaining a high degree of self-control (Clark 1983a). Urged on by their research initiatives, and a stifling policy on academic promotion (see section 3.3), academics choose to devote the most demanding part of their environment in interaction with other academics in the same field and, in short, they are possessed by the logics of discipline, expertise, and professionalised disorder (Clark 1983a). Clark proposes (Clark 1983a) that such 'devotion' makes them ignore and resist demands for change and can sometimes ignore such imputed demands for decades at a time (see page 107, section 3.5). Change is resisted on disciplinary grounds, but it is also thereby generated by research-driven evolutions of disciplinary knowledge and diversification of disciplinary expertise (Clark 1983a). Knowledge therefore becomes power; power to change and affect change in other subsystems or subunits. So if one, let's say, Nobel laureate insists on doing research and no teaching then the university will have very little to negotiate with for fear of losing that laureate. Through time and yielding to such demands, the university allows a culture of "*stars and scrubbers*" to be generated (these exact words were used in interview #33, Appendix #2). To establish such a culture requires success in research that creates a circle of further disciplinary evolution, further self-control by academics that end up possessing further power, enough to influence organisational identity. As Hatch and Schultz suggest (Hatch and Schultz 2002), when the powerful insist on the right to make final decisions, the effects of power further infiltrate the dynamics of organisational identity.

An organisation's identity (i.e. what its members believe to be its character) as well as its image are critical constructs for understanding the relationship between actions on and interpretations of an issue over time (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). An organisation's identity filters and moulds an organisation's interpretation of and action on an issue and therefore, the pattern of action on issues can reinforce or, potentially, transform the

organisation's identity and image through individuals' sense-making efforts (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). It does not come as a surprise, then, that responses to Question #24 (see Appendix #1) about the elite status of University A were unanimous in the good quality of the students. Through the academics' sense-making efforts (Dutton and Dukerich 1991), the university's identity and image is reinforced in their minds through the process of 'mirroring and reflecting' (Hatch and Schultz 2002; Alvesson and Robertson 2006). What they do, how they act and what solutions they propose gain legitimacy through the reinforcement of the image (Meyer 1982) and, by analogy, the 'mirroring and reflecting' gains legitimacy in their minds (Hatch and Schultz 2002). The process of 'mirroring and reflecting' was used by Alvesson and Robertson (Alvesson and Robertson 2006) to explain the identity and image constructs held by elite consultancy firms' employees. Alvesson and Robertson (2006) show that by exercising choice in client selection, a firm was building an image of working with selected, affluent clientele and, through the use of symbolic capital, the 'mirroring and reflecting' process (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Hatch and Schultz 2002) was gaining external legitimacy and was reinforced in the employees' minds as an elite status. When this process becomes embedded as a cognitive construct it will cause cognitive complexity to decrease and loose coupling to increase (Weick 2001, p. 387). By corollary, the more loose coupling prevails in an organisation, the more 'mirroring and reflecting' is to be expected. Therefore, the unanimous claim by the academics of University A about the quality of the students leaves little doubt about how extensively loosely-coupled this university is. It is important, though, to stress that this is a dynamic process, the product of continuous social constructions, and as such it is subject to change.

As Hatch and Schultz put it:

> *"At any moment identity is the immediate result of conversation between organizational (cultural) self-expressions and mirrored stakeholder images, recognizing, however, that whatever is claimed by members or other stakeholders about an organizational identity will soon be taken up by processes of impressing and reflecting which feed back into further mirroring and expressing processes. This is how organizational identity is continually created, sustained and changed."* (Hatch and Schultz 2002, p. 1004)

4.3 Perils

Analysis of my results from the organisational perspective has shown that University A has a structural design that approximates to cybernetic systems (Ashby 1956; Conant and Ashby 1970; Steinbruner 1974; Birnbaum 1989). It generates consistently high, low variation outcomes by educating consistently high achieving students with low profile variation in an educational environment of restricted variety in any educational approaches. In such an environment, my perception of the respondents was that any increase in variety of the teaching approaches is likely to create 'unnecessary' variety. That variety, by following the law of requisite variety, is likely to lead to a decrease in the expected outcomes if, and only if, the quality of the students remains *invariably* the same. It follows that the consistently high quality of the students is what should be of vital importance for this university. In other words, the quality of the students is the major thermostat, the critical indicator of any change for the university (Birnbaum 1989). Because cybernetic leaders pay attention not to what is going not well but to what is wrong (Birnbaum 1989), response is likely to be initiated by attempting to rectify the increase in variety. Such a response might be slow to materialise because, as Birnbaum (1989) shows, the university will not know, unless through techniques such as trend analysis, if its graduates achieve less. University A will respond if adverse comment comes as an alumni complaint or external examiners (an input) (Birnbaum 1989, p. 241).

By comparing the respondents narratives with analyses of interpretation systems in organisations (Daft and Weick 1984; Weick 2001), it is apparent that, among the four alternative models of interpretation systems (Daft and Weick 1984; Weick 2001), University A is based upon undirected viewing with un-analysable assumptions about its environment and passive organisational intrusiveness. Using such equivocality reduction (a characteristic of undirected viewing) means that certain problems may pass unnoticed for some time if not reported through formal feedback channels (Daft and Weick 1984; Weick 2001).

Issues that are not going well (Birnbaum 1989), though, may receive equivocal attention. One such issue concerns the training of the disputation teachers as highlighted in institutional audits reports conducted by the national teaching quality agency (Teaching 2003; Teaching 2008, names edited to maintain anonymity). *Disputations* are a unique system of personalised tuition (see section 3.3) that is highly regarded within the university as an excellent pedagogical approach (Tapper and Palfreyman 1998; Tapper 2000; Palfreyman 2001; Ashwin 2005; Ashwin 2006). *Disputations* offer students the opportunity to engage in dialogue about what they have studied with fellow students (Ashwin 2005), while maintaining a close contact with their disputation tutor through regular small group sessions (see section 3.3). This pedagogical form of personalised tuition (Palfreyman 2001) is in a perilous state by the quality and the level of preparation (both technical and professional) of the disputation teachers (Tapper and Palfreyman 1998). Increasingly, the university recruits Ph.D. students and contracted research staff, as well as freelance tutors, as disputation teachers. The financial incentives are obvious, for a Ph.D. student for example, who has to fund her own studies and therefore an extra income is desirable. The level of preparation, though, for such a task by the disputation teachers is highly variable and often questionable (Teaching 2003; Teaching 2008, names edited to maintain anonymity). Following recommendations by the national teaching quality agency, University A tries to remedy that by introducing compulsory induction courses for prospective disputation teachers (Teaching 2003; Teaching 2008, names edited to maintain anonymity). However, the responses in interviews with four disputation teachers (see Appendix #2 (supplement)) revealed that such induction courses were considered to be ineffective. Consequently, the quality and effectiveness of a disputation teacher is not based on her level of induction but more often on her enthusiasm, experience and professionalism. These qualities of the disputation teachers should be on top of the disciplinary knowledge they should have or their ability to implement diverse teaching repertoires (Ashwin 2006). Ashwin (2006) reported disciplinary difference in the way

disputation teachers conduct *disputations* with variety between the approaches even in the same discipline. Consequently, disputation induction courses should be thorough and extensive, taking into consideration not only the disciplinary differences but also the individual teacher's approach. Improving the quality of the induction courses and, therefore, the quality of the disputation teachers has been difficult to secure. The national teaching quality agency acknowledge that (Teaching 2003, p. 18, 36).

There is, however, another more perilous side to the management of *disputations*. The research-intensive profile of the university means that academics will devote as much of their time to research as possible since that will secure their promotion prospect. Such research-active academics increasingly opt (as reported in interview #4 and #5 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log) not to conduct any *disputations*, so the university loses a valuable pool of potential disputation teachers. I have been unable to find conclusive statistics about how many of the faculty staff are active as disputation teachers during my research, receiving only anecdotal reports about academic staff refusing to do *disputations*. The intention of research-active academic staff to not get involved with *disputations* may influence also their attitude towards their contracted research staff by denying them the opportunity of becoming disputation teachers (interview with a disputation teacher (interview #4, Appendix #2 (supplement))).

Another, more general and more serious threat to the system of *disputations* is the erosion of external support for this system (Tapper 2000; Palfreyman 2001). The high research-intensive profile of University A means that there is strong, international competition for any academic position that becomes available. Recruiting the most competent researcher is paramount to the continuing success of the university. Although the university may have invested in a 'pipeline' for producing its next lecturer from its students (see page 97), the paramount importance of research means that not everyone from its ranks will be its next lecturer. Although most of the respondents to my interviews graduated from University A, and thereby follow the 'pipeline' rule (see page 97), there

were several who graduated from other universities. Any alteration in the variety of the new academic staff may inadvertently increase the variety of the perspectives towards *disputations* with some new academic staff opting not to conduct *disputations* and thus contributing to a culture against *disputations*. This may be aided by the lack of appreciation by newly appointed academic staff of the symbolic value of rituals and missions of University A, despite the fact that the university has in place an induction course for newly appointed academic staff that lasts for several years (interview #12, Appendix #2 (supplement).

When it comes to *disputations*, the university is faced with a complex array of problems not solvable by quick solutions (Tapper 2000). If, on the one hand, newly appointed academic staff refuse to conduct *disputations*, the university will have to recruit less experienced and potentially inadequate disputation teachers thus inadvertently potentially increasing the variety to the system. If, on the other hand, the university requires future newly appointed academic staff to conduct *disputations*, it may stand to jeopardise their research prospects.

Another critical issue highlighted in the interviews, (see section 3.2), is the existence of *Courses* of different size and breadth within University A. Respondents represented their undergraduate *Courses* as definitions of their departments or faculties. This fragmented establishment along disciplinary lines works for the benefit of departments when they are part of or contribute to large *Courses* that accept a large number of students (see Appendix #4). Designed in the way they are, these *Courses* allow for significant localised control (Clark 1983a) by the academics in the departments that contribute to them. It was narrated in one interview that "*we do not have to do teaching for each year of the course*", (interview #9 transcript, Appendix #2), so time can be devoted to other activities such as research. Consequently, *Courses* that have large student numbers and involve diverse disciplines may offer existential security.

There are, however, *Courses* that are run by departments that are fairly small and consequently receive fewer students without any substantial deviation from the average student to staff ratio (see Table 2). These smaller departments have a perilous state of existence because the existence of their *Course* affects directly the existence of the department precisely because the department is not a contributor to a large *Course*. Future changes along disciplinary lines and preferences of future undergraduate students may weigh unfavourably against the continuation of such small *Courses* (Tight 2007). Although such an outcome does not mean that a department will automatically cease to exist, it does mean that that department may have to offer more *Courses* or merge with another organisational subunit. Such changes along disciplinary lines have great potential (Clark 1998; Marginson 2006) in transforming the higher education landscape, though, in my view, such transformations are highly unlikely to occur suddenly in University A.

Another factor that may result in the demise of an independent department and, consequently, its *Course* is the reliance of departments on how well they rank in research. On the one hand, a less than anticipated ranking can potentially result in what can be regarded as unacceptable performance and thereby a reduction in legitimacy (Meyer 1982). On the other hand, lower research rankings may result in a decrease in the numbers and quality of students thereby potentially causing an increase of the variety of the outcomes (Lengnick-Hall and Sanders 1997). This competition for high ranking in research activities thus can be detrimental to the future of small departments that organise their own *Courses*. Any future change, though, probably will not happen suddenly and, when it does, is likely to be the subject of extensive mediation (Weick 2001). Being a "*federation of small institutions*" (interview #12 transcript, Appendix #2 (supplement)) and maintaining a prominent research profile makes University A more likely to absorb a change along disciplinary lines and not be strongly affected by it (Clark 1983a).

4.4 Change

My results expose a contradiction between what academics in University A, through their narratives in interview transcripts, perceive as change; and what archival documents, committees minutes and internal media coverage or press releases report as change. The interview transcripts, on the one hand, reveal personal beliefs, expectations and perceptions about the nature of change as falling into second-order changes (Clark 1998; Clark 2000; Boyce 2003). Several respondents have mentioned in passing that things change in University A very slowly. Such perception of the nature of change, a slow, misrepresented process, implies that for them change involves the underlying values of the institution and so change is transformational and irreversible. This is in sharp contrast with statements in teaching committee minutes, internal media coverage and press releases by University A or other archival documents. Analysis of such documents spanning the last 10-12 years reveals that there is a multiplicity of incremental change and invisible change (Clark 1984). It is first-order change (Boyce 2003, p. 106) that involves changes in faculty and department structures, revisions, additions and removals of courses, departmental mergers and even subtle changes to course contents. As discussed above, the cybernetic nature of the organisation (Ashby 1956; Birnbaum 1988; Birnbaum 1989) with the detailed attendance to multiplicity of issues, the overburden of rituals and myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977), the high degree of self-control attained by academics in the segmented academic professionalism (Clark 1983a) who are, at the same time, possessed by the logics of discipline, expertise, and professionalised disorder (Clark 1983a), and the systemic loosely-coupled nature of the institution (Weick 1976; Orton and Weick 1990), are the major contributors to the lack of perception of first-order changes.

I propose that the belief of those interviewed that student quality is the elite attribute of University A, in other words the 'mirroring and reflecting' effect (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Hatch and Schultz 2002; Alvesson and Robertson 2006), contributes substantially to the perception of academics and administrators of University A of the lack of first-order

changes (Boyce 2003, p. 106). Academics and administrators, just like stakeholders in organisations (Dutton and Dukerich 1991), actively monitor the quality of the students that are matriculated in University A. They are actually heavily involved in this admissions process, fully aware that the admissions process can be especially character enhancing or damning. Because an organisation's image provides the attributes members believe people outside the organisation use to distinguish it (Dutton and Dukerich 1991), it is tantamount to organisation's identity, although, strictly speaking, it is not the same as identity (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). But an organisation's image leads to identity-building especially if the image is identity-enhancing (Hatch and Schultz 2002). By selecting very good, highly motivated students from a very large, national and international pool of applicants, academics and administrators in University A essentially bet on an image-enhancing prospect. The image of University A matters to its academics and administrators because it represents their "*best guesses at what characteristics others are likely to ascribe to them because of their organizational affiliation*" (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). The image has to remain untarnished and every effort is made towards that by selecting highly motivated, academically bright students. When, then, academics and administrators have to make sense of proposed or enacted first-order changes within the organisation, they assume that the organisation's image will remain the same; the organisation will still be distinguished by people outside (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). Therefore, if some first-order changes did not tarnish the image, then other similar first-order changes will not have image-tarnishing impetus. In other words, as suggested by (Dutton and Dukerich 1991): "*an organization's image and identity guide and activate individuals' interpretations of an issue and motivations for action on it, and those interpretations and motivations affect patterns of organizational action over time.*" (Dutton and Dukerich 1991, p. 517). First-order organisational changes (Boyce 2003, p. 106) are thus less (or not) discernible by academics and administrators and change for them is only any second-order change and happens slowly.

But change, first-order change, does happen constantly in University A. Next, I will briefly describe some of these examples, all taking place in the last 10-12 years, of first-order changes which demonstrate that change is on-going (Weick 1995; Colville and Pye 2010) in University A but the sense-making process of the academics and administrators fails to incorporate it as an image change.

- A well-publicised move by the university to close one of its departments (AHA (F), Appendix #3). One of the reasons for such a proposal was the department's less than satisfactory research achievements. By internal mediation, all covered by mass media, a compromise was achieved and the department remained. This incident was only mentioned in interview #2 (Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log) but not in any other interview.
- A recent merger between an institute that was not providing undergraduate teaching and a department (CEBT (D), Appendix #3). The merger was extensively covered in the corresponding interview (Interview #3 transcript, Appendix #2) and internal press releases as a positive move but there was no mention of it in other interviews.
- A recent merger between two departments and the subsequent change of the departmental name (PDN (D), Appendix #3). The merger was briefly mentioned in the corresponding interview (Interview #4 transcript, Appendix #2) and internal press releases also as a positive move but there was no mention of it in other interviews.
- A very recent merger by three departments into one faculty (PPS (F), Appendix #3). Again the merger was mentioned in the corresponding interview (Interview #11 transcript, Appendix #2) and internal press releases also as a positive move but there was no mention of it in other interviews.
- A merger between two institutes and a department into one faculty (E (F), Appendix #3). The merger was described in the corresponding interview (Interview #33 transcript, Appendix #2) but there was no mention of it in another interview by a member of the same faculty (interview #2, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log).

- A well-publicised case of legal dispute between the university and one of its Professors.

The case was settled, and led to the university's enforcement of transparent academic promotions criteria to prevent the occurrence of any other such incidents. This incident is mentioned in Chapter 3 (Results). It happened 12 years ago. Its repercussions were narrated in some detail with no mention of the time it happened (interview #11, Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log). However, in another interview with a prominent academic of University A, the incident is mentioned as taking place *"quite a long time ago."* (Interview #12 transcript, Appendix #2).

I am not trying to make a point here about whether people remember well or accurately dates and changes, or whether they use vague answers to avoid being explicit about sensitive issues that may feel uncomfortable with. On the other hand, one can also argue that it is expectable of a large university to exhibit adaptability (Clark 1983a). The point I am trying to make is that such substantial changes, all happening within a historically very short period of time and all gearing up towards increased efficiency, accountability and management of educational resources, are not capable of tarnishing the organisation's image as a construct held in organisation members' minds. The organisation's image, not its reputation, as a mental construct makes the organisation meaningful to individuals and motivates individuals to action in particular ways and at particular times (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). If the image does not change then change is perceived as adjustments: incremental, subtle and, through time, negligible.

Change is also happening through the evolution of disciplinary knowledge within universities (Clark 1983b). Clark argues that higher education, rather than been thought as an interdependent institution within society, is actually a massively developing institution with structures that provide insulation and strengthened hegemony over certain tasks and functions (Clark 1983b, p. 3). This institutional capacity provides higher education organisations with the power to affect society and the world. Why this comes about needs little theorising in this day and age (look at medical science, for one example!). What this

entails is that universities gain the legitimacy to define what currently counts as knowledge. As Clark suggests (Clark 1983b, p. 26) educational structures help define what currently counts as knowledge and therefore are a theory of knowledge. Research is the hothouse of new knowledge and so research-intensive academic departments act as stakeholders of disciplinary knowledge (Clark 1983b, p. 26) and thereby stakeholders of the power such disciplinary knowledge grants them. Possessing such disciplinary power ensures that universities (or their departments) will get on top and stay on top of academic league tables (Tight 2000; Dill and Soo 2005; Usher and Savino 2006) sometimes only to find themselves in the grips of a Circe-like transformation from substance to image (Gioia and Corley 2002). Possessing such disciplinary power also allows them to legitimate any evolution in disciplinary knowledge and any direction perceived as emerging (Clark 1983b; Gioia and Corley 2002). In a multiplicity of ways (Clark 1983b) this leads to increasing numbers of post-graduate courses, further amalgamation or diversification of departments, creation of more research centres in the periphery of the educational organisation all spurred by research-driven growth. In view of Clark's propositions (Clark 1996; Clark 1997; Clark 1998; Clark 2000), my research deliberately did not investigate the constructs of graduate teaching within University A. This is currently an area of intensive evolution and great expansion in University A as well as many other universities. It is a constantly changing landscape especially as it gears up to the implementation of the Bologna process (Palfreyman 2008). Being research-intensive, University A is a major player in the expansion of graduate courses if it has to keep its elite status as a leading research university. I propose that, remaining true to its cybernetic control system, University A chooses research as its core mission and as a measure of its elite status, just as it chooses good students for its teaching as a measure of its elite status.

The linkages *within* most subsystems at University A are stronger than the linkage *between* most subsystems, and *in the short run* what happens in one such subsystem has little to do with what happens in another (Birnbaum 1989). However, *in the long run*

developments are more difficult to foresee and prepare for: The presence of small departments that recruit a very small number of students (see Appendix #4) that "*come to define themselves by their course*" (see Chapter 3), means that any long term change in disciplinary knowledge (Clark 1983b), i.e. a discipline through time loosing its market niche, may mean that such departments will cease to exist and their *Courses* discontinued.

But there exists a more imminent danger: The reliance on research assessment as a means of government funding means that if, for whatever reason and following the law of requisite variety, the desired outcomes fall, then students will stop coming and a drop in student numbers, in turn, will increase university governance's intervention (variety in the system) to the departments. Whether this variety will come as an axe or a crown, I will leave it for the reader to guess.

I put the question of change to several respondents in my interviews but because of their bound rationality they could not forecast any second-order changes (Boyce 2003) of University A. Only one respondent commented on the reforms of the University of Melbourne with its decrease in the number of undergraduate courses and another respondent commented on the higher proportion of graduate to undergraduate students at the California Institute of Technology.

Finally, I asked the same question to the Head of AOT:

"*How do you see this university 30 years from now?*
I suppose, in 30 years, it will be the same, you know, things in [edited: University A] change slowly…
Well then, 50 or 60 years from now?"

(Facing away from me and gazing out of the window says…)

"Well, in 50 years, there will probably be more graduate programs, less courses, I mean more streamlining of the courses, a move towards more post-graduate courses…you know, it is this culture of research…teaching is something that they just do…"

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Appendix #1: The research tool (*)

Interview Schedule

Introduction:

My name is Skarlatos Dedos and I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education at the Open University. I am interested in the role of teaching and nature of teaching within this University and would like to ask you some questions about that.

Project Implementation:

I am researching my project by conducting semi-structured interviews with Heads of Teaching Committees of each Department or Faculty of the University. In order to ensure that I do not lose any materials, I hope that it is acceptable to you for me to tape record the interview. All responses will be confidential, and anonymity too is guaranteed according to the ethical rules and regulations of the Open University. I will then undertake an analysis of the teaching practices of the University utilising a combination of policy documents, interview transcripts and archival materials.

Areas of enquiry I would like to discuss with you are grouped under the following headings:

<u>Personal background</u>:

1) Can you give me a biographical sketch of yourself as a member of this Department/faculty?

2) I would be interested to have an outline of your range of activities, including research and teaching experience as well as your current teaching load?

3) How would you describe the teaching ethos within this Department/faculty?

4) What does good teaching mean for you?

5) How have you arrived to the position as Head of this Teaching Committee?

6) What are the main tasks associated with being the Head of a Teaching Committee?

7) What is the average amount of time per week that you allocate as Head of this Teaching Committee compared to your other activities?

Teaching Committee's role within the Department/faculty:

8) What role does the Teaching Committee play in this Department/faculty?

9) How successful you think it is in its role?

10) To your judgement, what is the actual importance of the Teaching Committee?

11) How is the agenda of Teaching Committee meetings decided?

12) How does the Teaching Committee decide teaching priorities, reach decisions and take actions? Can you give me examples?

13) What are the current priorities of the Teaching Committee? Can you give me examples of concrete actions taken to address these priorities?

14) How does the Teaching Committee influence the role and practices of the teaching staff within this Department/faculty?

15) How does the Teaching Committee promote change and innovation in the teaching practices of this Department/faculty? Can you give me examples?

16) Considering the role of the Teaching Committee, would you improve the teaching practices within this Department/faculty by any other way? If so, how?

Teaching Committee's role within the University:

17) Within this University where is this Teaching Committee accountable?

18) How important are external relationships with agents such as [edited: teaching quality agency], the [edited: teaching resources agency] or internal centres for teaching innovations in your work as a Teaching Committee? Are there examples you can give?

19) What use does the Teaching Committee make of internal centres for innovation in teaching?

20) What are your views of the policies and procedures that assure good teaching practices within this University?

21) In your opinion, what is the dominant University perspective on teaching? How far does this perspective affect the work of the Teaching Committee, and penetrate or affect the teaching carried out within this Department/faculty?

22) With possible examples, does this Teaching Committee have a formal role within University quality assurance procedures for promoting quality teaching and learning?

23) Personally, do you experience any conflicting demands due to the Head of the Teaching Committee being both the University representative to the Department/faculty, and the Departmental/faculty representative to the University? If so, can you talk through any examples?

24) The wider society regards this University as an elite University. How does this elite University viewpoint in any way affect teaching, and the status of teaching, within the Department/faculty and the work of your Teaching Committee?

25) In your opinion, what is the single most distinctive feature of the teaching practices of this University that sets it apart from other Universities?

<u>Teaching Committee's role in teaching and learning:</u>

26) In what ways, if any, does the students' quality and background determine the relative emphasis your Teaching Committee places on teaching and/or learning?

27) Realistically, what effect do student representatives and feedback have upon the quality of teaching and learning within the Department/faculty? Can you recall any particular instances of quality improvement occurring on the basis of student reps and feedback?

28) Are there procedures and structures for recognising and rewarding quality teaching within the Department/faculty? In your view, how effective are these procedures?

29) According to an author in [edited: country name] higher education there are 4 categories of teaching excellence. These are: 1) the lecture-based, 2) the work-based learning, 3) the group work and 4) the participatory dialogue. Which of these categories do you believe that best describes the teaching provisions of your Department/faculty?

30) Is there anyone else within the Department/faculty that you think will be good for me to seek for an interview?

31) How professionally and personally rewarding is being the Head of a Teaching Committee?

(*) Appendix #1 is the document that was sent to all the LoPs and to several of the Heads of Teaching Committees and it contains the questions that were asked during the interviews.

Appendix #2: Interview Schedule Log

Teaching Institution (1)	Contacted/Met with LoP	Role of LoP in Dept/faculty	HoCT	Role of HoTC in Dept/faculty	Interview No.	Interview Day
ASNC (Department)	Yes	Undergraduate Studies Director	Same	Lecturer	27	8/6/2009
AHA (Faculty)	Yes	Administrative Officer	Different	Head of Faculty	24	13/5/2009
CL (Faculty)	Yes/No (+)	Faculty Administrator	Different	Lecturer	30	12/8/2009
MML (Faculty)	Yes/No (-)	Administrative Officer	Different	Lecturer	X	Decline by email
M (Faculty)	Yes	Secretary of Faculty	Different	Lecturer	10	24/3/09
PH (Faculty)	Yes (+)	Administrative Officer	Different	Head of Faculty	X	No reply/Vague Decline
EN (Faculty)	Yes/No (+)	Administrative Officer	Different	Professor	17	17/4/2009 Written reply
DI (Faculty)	Yes/No (-)	Academic Secretary	Same	Lecturer	X	Decline by email
AMES (Faculty)	Yes/No (+)	Faculty Administrator	Different	Head of Faculty	23	4/5/2009
MS (SSC)	Yes	Teaching Coordinator	Different	Teaching Coordinator	32	27/8/2009
MS S3	Yes	Teaching Coordinator	Different	Teaching Coordinator	16	6/4/2009
MS S2	Yes	Teaching Coordinator	Different	Teaching Coordinator	25	21/5/2009
MS S1	Yes	Teaching Coordinator	Different	Teaching Coordinator	18	21/4/2009
CH (Department)	Yes	HoTC	Same	Lecturer	1	5/2/2009
ES (Department)	Yes	Departmental Administrator	Different	Lecturer	13	27/3/2009
GE (Department)	Yes	Departmental Administrator	Different	Lecturer	7	4/3/2009
MSM (Department)	Yes	Academic Secretary	Different	Professor	X	Decline by email
MA (Faculty)	Yes/No (+)	Secretary of Faculty	Different	Professor	5	27/2/2009
PH (Department)	Yes/No (+)	Academic Secretary	Different	Professor	2	9/2/2009
EN (Department)	Yes/No (-)	Departmental Administrator	Different	Head of Department	X	Refuse by email (LoP)
JBS	Yes	Director of Operations	Different	Lecturer	34	15/10/2009
CL	Yes	Departmental Secretary	Different	Professor	19	22/4/2009
CE (Department)	Yes/No (+)	Teaching Committee Secretary	Different	Lecturer	3	11/2/2009
AR (Department)	Yes/No (+)	Departmental Administrator	Different	Lecturer	35	08/02/2010
BA (Department)	Yes	Administrative Officer	Different	Lecturer	31	24/8/2009
E (Faculty)	Yes	Faculty Secretary	Different	Professor	33	13/10/2009
EC (Faculty)	Yes/No (+)	Teaching Committee Secretary	Different	Lecturer/Administrator	20	22/4/2009
HI (Faculty)	Yes/No (+)	Administrative Officer	Different	Lecturer	21	27/4/2009
HPS (Department)	Yes (-)	Administrative Officer	Different	Lecturer	X	Decline by email
LE (Department)	Yes/No (-)	Administrative Officer	Different	Professor	29	22/7/2009
LA (Faculty)	Yes	Teaching Committee Secretary	Different	Lecturer	6	26/2/2009
PPS (Faculty)	Yes/No (-)	Teaching Administrator	Different	Lecturer	11	25/3/2009
SA (Department)	Yes	Administrative Officer	Different	Professor	8	16/3/2009

BI (Department)	Yes	Head of Teaching Committee	Same	Professor	26	26/5/2009
PA (Department)	Yes	Chief Teaching Secretary	Different	Head of Department	15	2/4/2009
PH (Department)	Yes	Head of Teaching Committee	Same	Lecturer	9	18/3/2009
PDN (Department)	Yes	Departmental Secretary	Different	Professor	4	19/2/2009
PS (Department)	Yes/No (+)	Departmental Administrator	Different	Professor	28	17/7/2009
VM (Department)	Yes/No (-)	Administrative Officer	Same	Administrative officer	X	No reply (x4)
Z (Department)	Yes	Head of Teaching Committee	Same	Lecturer	22	30/4/2009
EP (Department)	Yes	Departmental Secretary	Different	Lecturer	14	31/3/2009
GE (Department)	Yes/No (+)	Administrative Officer	Different	Lecturer	12	26/3/2009
Total 42			**12S/30D**		**Total 35**	

Colours are according to disciplinary *Groups* (see Appendix #3) within University A.

1) Acronyms are used instead of the actual names of the teaching institutions.

2) LoP: List of Persons (see page 53), (+) Indicates that the representative from the List of Persons responded and helped with my request, (-) indicates that the representative from the List of Persons was unhelpful and did not reply to my email requests.

3) HoCT: Head of Teaching Committee. Despite the different academic ranks, those individuals that are not Professors are indicated as Lecturers for ethical reasons.

Appendix #2 (supplement): Additional Interview Schedule Log

Role in Teaching	University Allocation	Role in University A	Interview No.	Interview Day
Administration Office for Teaching (AOT)	Administration	Head of AOT	1	11/1/2008
Office for Teaching Technology (OTT)	Resources	Head of OTT	2	3/5/2008
Faculty office	Administration	Faculty Secretary	3	4/2/2009
Disputation Teacher 1	PH (D)	Researcher	4	12/5/2009
Disputation Teacher 2	CH (D)	Researcher	5	6/6/2009
National Teaching Fellow	E (F)	Lecturer	6	12/6/2009
Disputation Teacher 3	CH (D)	Teaching Fellow	7	5/8/2009
Disputation Teacher 4	Resources (External) (1)	Teaching Fellow	8	13/8/2009
Chair of Education Committee	Administration	Professor	9 (written reply)	26/8/2009
Office for Teaching (AOT)	Administration	Head of AOT	10	3/9/2009
Director of Education	E	Lecturer	11	18/9/2009
Professional Development	Resources	Affiliated Lecturer	12	5/2/2010
Dean of M	M	Manager	13	8/2/2010

This supplementary list in Appendix #1 shows the additional interviews conducted for my research purposes.
1) Indicates a person that works as a disputation officer but does not receive income from the university.

Appendix #3: Distribution of educational institutions within the *Groups* of University A.

H (8)	S (8)	E (6)	B (9)	T (4)	M (12)
AHA (F)	AA (F)	MA (F)	PDN (D)	CL (D)	CB (D)
(2 D: A, HA)	(3 D: AR, BA, SA)	(2 D: DAMTP, DPMMS)			
AMES (F)	PPS (F)	GE (D)	ES (D)	CEBT (D)	CN (D)
(2D: EAS, MES)	(3 D)			(2 D: CE, BT)	
EN (F)	E (F)	CH (D)	GE (D)	EN (D)	HE (D)
(2D: EN, ASNC*)					
MML (F)	HI (F)	PH (D)	PA (D)	JBS (D)	MG (D)
(8 D)					
DI (F)	HPS* (D)	ES (D)	PH (D)		OG (D)
M (F)	EC (F)	MSM (D)	BI (D)		ME (D)
PH (F)	LA (F)		PS (D)		ON (D)
CL (F)	LE (D)		VM (D)		PA (D)
			Z (D)		PS (D)
					PHPC (D)
					RA (D)
					SU (D)

The table shows the distribution of educational institutions within University A that provide *Courses* to undergraduate students. F: Faculty, D: Department. All other acronyms are random for ethical reasons.

Underlined acronyms show the level at which the teaching committee operates within each *Group*. (*) Indicates that no actual teaching committee operates within the institution and the whole of the undergraduate teaching is managed by one individual.

Appendix #4: Distribution of *Courses* offered to undergraduate students within University A.

Courses	Departments involved	Interviewed	2006-7 Appl.	2006-7 Offers %	2006-7 Admissions %	2007-8 Appl.	2007-8 Offers %	2007-8 Admissions %	2008-9 Appl.	2008-9 Offers %	2008-9 Admissions %
EN (F)	1	√	895	24.6 %	23.2 %	879	24.9 %	23.1 %	1,035	22.9 %	21.4 %
AMES (F)	2	√	None	None	None	None	None	None	188	35.1 %	32.4 %
AMES (F)	2	↲	171	27.5 %	22.2 %	185	34.6 %	31.9 %	None	None	None
AHA (F)	1	√	119	26.1 %	23.5 %	110	30.0 %	27.3 %	126	31.0 %	27.0 %
AHA (F)	1	↲	429	12.8 %	11.9 %	388	11.6 %	10.3 %	499	10.4 %	8.6 %
ANSC (D)	1	√	66	53.0 %	40.9 %	51	43.1 %	37.3 %	52	55.8 %	48.1 %
CL (3 year)	1	√	158	55.7 %	51.3 %	158	55.7 %	51.3 %	173	56.6 %	50.9 %
CL (4 year)	1	↲	37	24.3 %	21.6 %	37	40.5 %	35.1 %	34	32.4 %	32.4 %
PH (F)	1	X	258	22.5 %	20.9 %	240	20.8 %	19.6 %	312	17.9 %	16.7 %
DI (F)	1	X	134	41.8 %	39.6 %	155	41.3 %	35.5 %	124	48.4 %	46.8 %
MML (F)	8	X	603	33.8 %	32.7 %	564	35.6 %	33.3 %	605	33.4 %	31.6 %
MML (F)	8	↲	No direct admission								
M (F)	1	√	176	48.3 %	43.2 %	165	43.6 %	40.0 %	182	42.3 %	39.0 %
MS (PC)	12	√ (4)	1,395	20.7 %	19.2 %	1,520	19.7 %	18.9 %	1,702	17.0 %	16.2 %
MS (S)	12	√ (4)	No direct admission								
GE (D)	1	√	312	36.2 %	31.1 %	356	35.7 %	33.7 %	332	34.3 %	29.8 %
MA (F)	2	√ (1)	1,116	38.0 %	20.7 %	1,172	39.2 %	21.9 %	1,177	36.8 %	20.7 %
JBS	1	√	No direct admission								
CEB	1	√	No direct admission								
EN (D)	1	X	1,224	28.8 %	24.3 %	1,353	27.7 %	24.6 %	1,546	22.4 %	19.9 %

EN (D)	1	↲				No direct admission					
CL (D)	1	√	227	37.4 %	31.3 %	225	37.8 %	32.4 %	329	28.0 %	21.0 %
HI (F)	1	√	744	29.2 %	27.0 %	758	31.1 %	29.0 %	772	29.5 %	27.2 %
AR (F)	3	√	144	47.9 %	37.5 %	163	55.8 %	49.7 %	163	52.8 %	42.3 %
EC	1	√	1,160	16.6 %	15.3 %	1,256	16.1 %	14.7 %	1,396	14.4 %	12.8 %
E	1	√	130	59.2 %	47.7 %	106	52.8 %	40.6 %	98	51.0 %	42.9 %
LA (F)	1	√	1,123	21.2 %	18.3 %	1,068	22.8 %	20.6 %	1,062	23.2 %	20.6 %
LE (D)	1	√	235	26.0 %	24.3 %	259	24.3 %	23.2 %	261	24.1 %	21.5 %
PPS (F)	3	√ (1)	673	19.0 %	16.8 %	636	20.1 %	17.6 %	689	17.9 %	16.0 %
VS (PC)	1	X	351	22.8 %	18.8 %	375	23.5 %	20.3 %	414	20.3 %	18.1 %
VS (VM)	1	↲				No direct admission					
NS	13	√ (11) XX	2,013	35.0 %	31.8 %	2,109	32.8 %	30.3 %	2,278	30.9 %	28.4 %

The table shows the distribution of undergraduate *Courses* offered by educational institutions within University A. F: Faculty, D: Department, Appl: Applicants, ↲: A similar *Course* is offered by the same educational institution (Faculty). No direct admission: Such *Courses* are offered to undergraduates already studying within University A after their first year. All other acronyms are random for ethical reasons.

Appendix #5: Achievement profiles of University A undergraduates

Score	2006-2007 Applications %	2006-2007 Acceptances %	2007-2008 Applications %	2007-2008 Acceptances %	2008-2009 Applications %	2008-2009 Acceptances %
90+	77.3 %	96.8 %	81.2 %	98.3 %	80.0 %	98.4 %
85	12.5 %	2.7 %	10.9 %	1.6 %	11.6 %	1.4 %
80	5.5 %	0.2 %	4.6 %	0.1 %	4.6 %	<0.1 %
75	2.3 %	0.1 %	1.7 %	None	1.9 %	None
70	1.1 %	0.1 %	0.7 %	None	0.9 %	0.1 %
65	0.6 %	None	0.4 %	None	0.5 %	<0.1 %
60	0.3 %	None	0.2 %	None	0.2 %	None
55	0.2 %	None	0.1 %	None	0.1 %	None
50	0.1 %	<0.1 %	<0.1 %	None	0.1 %	None
45	<0.1 %	<0.1 %	0.1 %	None	<0.1 %	None
40	<0.1 %	None	<0.1 %	None	<0.1 %	None
35	None	None	None	None	<0.1 %	None
30	<0.1 %	None	<0.1 %	None	<0.1 %	None
25	None	None	None	None	None	None

The table shows the entry qualifications versus the acceptance for study in *Courses* of University A. Scores are expressed in converted units where 25 = 100.

Appendix #6: Exemplary Interview Transcript

Interview #12 Transcript

Before we start with the interview I would like to ask you 2 things: The first is, because you are an organiser of the [edited: course name] course I would like to ask you to give me a brief outline of which committees you are involved:

Well, it is actually not the [edited: couse name] it is the [edited: course name]

Yes, OK

So, my job is to organise the teaching for the first 3 years of the [edited: course name] students completely, so [edited: course name] teaching you may call it. Now, that teaching is delivered by the Faculty of [edited: B]and lots of different departments of the Faculty of [edited: B], so my job is to coordinate with lots of different departments. But I also have to liaise with the [edited: M] and the of [edited: department's name] over the teaching because our students feed into both those places. Now, if you want to know what the committee structure is...I mean, for [edited: M] the overall committee is a joint committee of the faculty board of [edited: M] and the faculty board of [edited: B] and it is called the [edited: committee name], that is the strategic body, chaired by the [edited: committee chair], then there is a sort of working, management committee, more for the day to day management which is called the [edited: committee name] which runs down in the faculty of [edited: B] and I chair that. Now, that does both [edited: course names]. On the [edited: course name] side then, there is the [edited: course name] education committee which oversees all [edited: number] years of [edited: course name] education and also feeds down to the [edited: course name]. So those are the 3 major committees.

You are not involved in the [edited: course name] course?

No.

OK. The next thing I want to ask you then is because you are the head of the teaching committee of this department, I want you to give me a brief outline of the teaching provisions of this department.

Of the [edited: department name] department?

Yes.

Ok, well the [edited: department name] department teaches in all [edited: number] years of the [edited: course name] and also does a little bit of [edited: course name] teaching as well. So, in the first year the [edited: department name] department contributes to the [edited: course name] course and to the [edited: course name], it contributes to the [edited: course name] course which is a [edited: department name] course and so on. In the second year....these are inter-departmental courses...in the second year it contributes to the [edited: course name] course, to the [edited: course name] course and I think...that is just about it...that is its main teaching in the [edited: course name]. And then, the third year it runs a [edited:course name] in [edited: department name].

So, we will start with the interview. There are four themes in the interview and because you have a dual role as you said, if you want to specify something about your other role or one of the two roles, please do so, I will sort of intervene and ask you about that. The first theme is about your personal background:

Q.1 Can you give me a biographical sketch of yourself as a member of this department/faculty?

I hope I will not have to go back too many years....I did my PhD a long time ago in what was then called [edited: department name] really and at that time I was working on yeast and fungi and stuff like that. I became staff member of the department of [edited: department name] over 30 years ago, a lecturer and so on, and I spent a lot of my time running first and second year courses and devised the teaching and things like that. About 20 years ago, we had a professor retired and I took over as acting

head of the department at that stage. I did that for a year until a new professor was there and then I did it again for a short spell after that because the professor that we had stayed for a 3 and a half -4 years and then left to go to industry...he was offered mega bucks to go to industry and so on. So, I had a couple of spells as head of the department, Then about 7 or 8 years ago, the faculty decided that they needed somebody to oversee the... changes to the [edited: course name] course and I applied for the job and I have done that sort of a half time being a university lecturer and head of committees.

Q.2 I would be interested to have an outline of your range of activities, including research and teaching experience as well as your current teaching load?

OK, well, because I am actually coming up to retirement I have not had a research group for the last 2 or 3 years. Up until then I did research in plants and things like that, but when the last grant was terminated and my post-docs got jobs and so on, I decided that I was not going to apply for another grant. Now, um, as far as teaching is concerned, I...I mean, my current teaching load is something like 20 odd lectures plus the element of practical teaching and things like that, mainly in the second year and [edited: course name] I do quite a lot of teaching like that...actually it is less now than it was before, I used to do a lot more. At one stage, I did 35 hours lecturing and do not remember what else.....I could look it up...

No, that is OK.

Q.3 How would you describe the teaching ethos within this department?

Well... the teaching ethos within this department is actually very good. I mean, most people are actually very committed to the teaching that they do and they are enthusiastic about it and they want to do the teaching to the best of their ability.

Q.4 What does good teaching mean for you?

Heh, heh, heh. (chuckles). What does good teaching mean! It means...the answer I will give you is terribly simple...It means making the students enthusiastic about the subject.

That is a very good answer!

Q.5 And how have you arrived to the position as head of this teaching committee?

We started having a departmental teaching committee 25 years ago. Until then decisions about teaching were taken by the whole staff meetings and that was a rather cumbersome way of dealing with this. It seemed to us that a better way of doing this was to have a subset of individuals from the staff who were involved with courses to sit down and think about the teaching that the department did and report back to the staff meetings and that is now the sort of the general model.

Is it because the department was growing in number or is it because the resources available were making it very difficult for a whole committee, for a whole departmental meeting to reach decisions.

Well, certainly when you have a big department it is difficult to reach consensus across a large number of people and, I do not know if it relates to resources but it relates to decision-making processes. It is much better to have a small volume of people who... are at least reasonably expert in what they are dealing with to discuss and make proposals. Now the staff meeting can agree or disagree with the proposals, but it helps to have a small body do the thinking.

Q.6 What are the main tasks associated with being the head of a teaching committee?

Well, OK, in this department the main task is to draw up an agenda for the term meetings with the secretary who takes the minutes...and so on and to essentially just get information from people to polish up that agenda and things like that, so that is the departmental teaching committee. As far as the [edited: department name] teaching committee is concerned, then again, yes, I draw up the agenda with the secretary of the faculty board but, we have to be responsive to what is going on in the

other departments of the faculty as well, so sometimes you have to write papers for these meetings to explain things that have happened.

Q.7 What is the average amount of time per week that you allocate as head of this teaching committee compared to your other activities?

These teaching committees meet on average once a term, I would....it depends on the sort of activity but in fact is not a huge amount of time every week.. I would imagine that I allocate between 1 to 3 hours a week

Q.8 What role does the teaching committee play in this department?

Well, first of all it looks at the teaching...its duty is to look at the teaching and examining commitments in the department, make sure that the department is fully equipped for its teaching and examining commitments. So, for example, to take the [edited: course name] teaching: At the end of every term the teaching committee would look at the student feedback and will ask: are the courses we are giving to the students doing what they are supposed to do? Are there problems? If there are problems, how do we fix that? So, it has not just a management role in deciding....I mean the other role is deciding on changes to the [edited: course name] course, to change what we are teaching in the modules and things like that. So there is a management function but there is also a quality assurance function.

Q.9 How successful you think it is in its role?

Well, I....sometimes it is very successful, I mean...currently the [edited: course name] course is running very well, but let me give you a for instance where the teaching committee will have to do something. Earlier this year we had a very sad occurrence where a colleague of ours, who delivers quite a lot of lectures in one of the modules, died suddenly. Now, we managed to put together a sort of emergency program to cover his lectures for the course that happened between January and February this year. But the teaching committee is saying, well, now we have to look forward and decide what we do to this module in the absence of this colleague. And that is the sort of intervention that we would do.

Q.10 To your judgement, what is the actual importance of the teaching committee? Would the department do without it?

Not, for now!

Q.11 How is the agenda of teaching committee meetings decided?

I tend to set the agenda, but because it is a relatively small department I talk to my colleagues in the coffee room and they say to me, you know, I want to discuss such and such, will you put this on the agenda of the teaching committee and so on...So, we have an informal discussion that sets the agenda but there are routine things as well.

Q.12 How does the teaching committee decide teaching priorities, reach decisions and take actions? Can you give me examples?

Well, when you say teaching priorities...the....it is difficult to know what you mean by priorities...because within the faculty of [edited: B] there is a program of teaching and, for example, if we are committed to such and such courses we have to service these courses. So, essentially what we would probably do is we will say, OK, we have to prioritise those courses, those are the ones we have to deliver because other departments rely on us to provide the teaching of those courses. Then we are thinking about our [edited: course name] and within the [edited: course name] we have a module structure so on and so forth, we think about that on a regular basis we review our teaching we decide what is worthy what is not worthy and so on and so forth.

Q.13 What are the current priorities of the teaching committee? Can you give me examples of concrete actions taken to address these priorities?

Well, I mean, I touched on this earlier on, we have lost this colleague....We have a priority at the moment we have a gap in our teaching course by this untimely death of our colleague, that is obviously a priority for us to do something about it and the other thing is we have a couple of staff members going on sabbatical next year. We

158 have to look at their teaching commitments and decide who is going to replace them.
159 Q.14 How does the teaching committee influence the role and practices of the
160 teaching staff within this department/faculty?
161 by giving back individual staff members feedback on the impact of their teaching
162 Do you do that through an online system?
163 Well, we had an online system with something called [edited: software name] but we
164 no longer do that. Now, we collect electronic feedback and we circulate that
165 electronic feedback to everyone.
166 Do you do that for the other committee as well?
167 Well, the [edited: course name] committee works in a slightly different way, it is
168 slightly higher level because it is not our departmental....so, for example, [edited:
169 department name] is one of the departments who send representatives to the [edited:
170 course name] committee. Now, the teaching that [edited: department name] do for the
171 [edited: M] students they collect feedback and they discuss it in their own teaching
172 committee. Now, we have student representatives on the [edited: course name]
173 committee and they can raise issues with the [edited: course name] committee if there
174 is a problem. The [edited: course name] committee does not look at individual course
175 student feedback so much, what it does do is look at feedback from examiners and
176 particularly external examiners.
177 And this feedback, do you relate that to your colleagues?
178 Yes, we do. I mean, even if they are not at departmental level, external examiner for
179 [edited: course name] has made some suggestions about our examination which we
180 are actively discussing.
181 Q.15 How does the teaching committee promote change and innovation in the
182 teaching practices of this department/faculty? Can you give me examples?
183 Well, a few years ago, for example, we went over to a modular system. Before that we
184 had a [edited: course name] which was essentially, more or less, a unitary course.
185 There were different blocks of courses in it, all rather different scientists and so on
186 and so forth...and we had a discussion about the way in which we are involved in
187 teaching and what was going on in the rest of the faculty and we decided that we
188 should go to a modular system, based on a 23-24 lecture module so that we could
189 share some teaching with other departments in the faculty.
190 Did that work?
191 It does work...it works...it works to a limited extent, it is not the actual lectures that is
192 the problem it is actually the examination structure. I mean, for example we have an
193 [edited: discipline name] module which we share with [edited: department name] and
194 [edited: department name] and we have about 10 students from [edited: department
195 name[and [edited: department name] sitting in with our 25-30 [edited: course name]
196 students doing this module.
197 Q.16 Considering the role of the teaching committee, would you improve the
198 teaching practices within this department/faculty by any other way? If so, how?
199 Well, that is an interesting question! I....think that it would be very useful for all newly
200 appointed lecturers to be given courses in presentation skills
201 Do they do that?
202 Well, the university does lay out courses but they are not compulsory.
203 So you think that that would have helped?
204 I think that are..., this is a personal reflection...when I first started I was given a set
205 of 8 lectures to do by the head of the department and I asked him what should I talk
206 about and he said, well, you are the expert! (Laughs)...and I think nowadays we are a
207 little bit better because we would not expect somebody starting their lecturing career
208 with a course to do that without some guidance from somebody more experienced.
209 Are we talking about a community of practice here?
210 Yes!

Do you think that this community of practice in University A, in general, is a strong one?

I do not think that it is as strong as it could be…let me put it that way…I think it is different now from when I was a young lecturer because I think then there was a strong community of practice and you learned how to do lectures and you learned how to do examining by sitting with other people who had done a lot of it. Nowadays, young lecturers appointed are…very much focused on developing their research career and as a result teaching tends to be somewhat marginalised, I mean in a research-focused university like [edited: University A]…

This is something that has been mentioned by others, prof. [edited: name] said the same!

Absolutely, I am sure Roger would have said the same!

Q.17 Within this university where is this teaching committee accountable?

Within the department, the teaching committee is quite clear, teaching committee is accountable to the staff meeting and effectively accountable to the head of department, now, in formal terms, in university education, the overall responsibility for teaching lies with the faculty, so eventually the head of department and the department are responsible to the faculty. Now the [edited: course name] committee has a slightly dual responsibility, yes it is responsible to the faculty because it is an overarching committee, so there is no one department that is responsible but it is responsible to the faculty board of [edited: B] and also to the faculty board of [edited: M] and the faculty board of [edited: VM] for the teaching it delivers. So, it is a rather diffused line of accountability but the line of accountability is there.

Q.18 How important are external relationships with agents such as [edited: teaching quality agency], the [edited: teaching resources agency] or internal centres for teaching innovations in your work as a teaching committee? Are there examples you can give?

Well, I mean, as far as external agencies are concerned for [edited: department name] they are absolutely crucial, because the [edited: professional agency name] has a statutory responsibility to validate all [edited: M] courses, so our course has to fulfil the criteria set out by the [edited: professional agency name[, so that is an absolutely critical interaction. The same is true for the [edited: professional agency name]. So, I have these people…OK. In general, we are also beholden to the [edited: teaching quality agency]. We are subservient to what they require as well, so, yes, there is a lot of this.

In the [edited: course] committee are these interactions direct or they go through the [edited: AOT]?

Well, actually the [edited: professional agency name] and the [edited: professional agency name] come and visit us directly. So, we do have direct interactions. But as far as the [edited: teaching quality agency] goes, then we will go through the [edited: AOT].

Q.19 What use does the teaching committee make of internal centres for innovation in teaching?

Well, very interesting question. Departments make a lot of use of [edited: OTT] particularly something that [edited: OTT] developed called [edited: software name] which is online resource and there are other things as well that individual departments and faculties developed and they get [edited: OTT] to help them with this sort of developments. So [edited: OTT], yes, quite a lot of interaction. The staff development is not as much used as it should be and it is perhaps not,... I do not know…, it is perhaps not as useful as it should be and again I think this comes back to the earlier question about the sort of group culture, the communities of practice and so on and so forth. No, bluntly, a lot of my colleagues who have gone to the teaching sessions laid on by the staff development have felt that they are not much use to them.

264 And it is a problem in University A. I do not think we have got it right.
265 I think my problem with that, if you want my personal experience with that, is that
266 there is no follow-up. To go there and you learn some stuff and then go back and
267 report to them and then they give you feedback, just like students do. I felt that they
268 stop on that and you do not get help continuously, that is what I felt.
269 That is right, whereas if you had a mentoring system within departments, a
270 continuous mentoring system, then it might work.
271 Q.20 What are your views of the policies and procedures that assure good teaching
272 practices within this university?
273 Well, I...think that the university going forward probably has to face up to the
274 realisation that it is going to have to reward people for excellence in teaching
275 something like as it already rewards people for excellence in research and I think that
276 that realisation is dawning in the heart of the university
277 But it is not there yet?
278 It is not there yet as an embedded culture, but it is something that will have to come,
279 you know, we now have a promotion system which is geared very much to research
280 excellence, but I think that there needs to be some sort of parallel tract or cognitive
281 tract if you like, that will reward dedication in teaching or dedication to improvement.
282 Q.21 In your opinion, what is the dominant university perspective on teaching? How
283 far does this perspective affect the work of the teaching committee, and penetrate or
284 affect the teaching carried out within this department/faculty?
285 Well, at the grassroots level, most people are happy to do their teaching and so
286 on...what they are more reluctant to do is spend a lot of time developing new teaching
287 practices, developing new courses and things like that, you know, people will happily
288 do their teaching, the teaching that is allotted to them, but they are not prepared to
289 spend their time thinking about the more strategic aspects...
290 Q.22 With possible examples, does this teaching committee have a formal role
291 within university quality assurance procedures for promoting quality teaching and
292 learning?
293 Well, the answer is yes for both committees that I am involved with. As far as the
294 department is concerned, yes, the department monitors feedback and tries to act on
295 feedback, tries to make sure that if a course is not delivering the sort of teaching that
296 is supposed to, that you change the course or you talk to the person delivering this
297 aspect and make sure they change it. So, it has got a closing-the-loop role for quality
298 assurance and it is also involved in the overall monitoring quality assurance. The
299 [edited: course name], as I explained before, does not monitor at the level of
300 individual courses or departments but it overall, it looks at the quality control in
301 terms of examinations and assessment.
302 Q.23 Personally, do you experience any conflicting demands due to the head of the
303 teaching committee being both the university representative to the
304 department/faculty, and the departmental/faculty representative to the university?
305 If so, can you talk through any examples?
306 Well, I think what you are asking really is: do these roles sometimes lie in a conflict of
307 interest? And the answer is that I have not experienced a huge conflict of interest yet,
308 but suppose... that, for example, if it was proposed that the [edited: department name]
309 department should do a large part of [edited: M] teaching, I think I would have to
310 declare an interest and not be involved in the discussion. That somebody else would
311 have to... If I was chairing the committee, I would have to get somebody else from the
312 [edited: department name] department to be involved in that discussion rather than
313 me, OK.
314 Why?
315 Because I think that if you are a chair of a committee then you have to maintain a
316 certain impartiality and it is very easy to get yourself in a position where your

departmental interests might conflict with the best interests of what you are trying to do, say for the [edited: course names].

When you say, you do not experience any conflict of interest, can you tell me why is that?

Well, because...in many respects it relates to my particular position, I am a member of the [edited: department name] department, as far as [edited: course name] is concerned, [edited: department name] does not actually do very much teaching in the [edited: course name] so that is probably the reason why I am not particularly conflicting, were I to be a member of [edited: department names] then might very well be more opportunity....

So, you think that your selection as a chair of the [edited: course name] committee might have been because you would have impartiality?

Well, I am not sure that that is why I was selected, but it helps.

Q.24 The wider society regards this university as an elite university. How does this elite university viewpoint in any way affect teaching, and the status of teaching, within the department/faculty and the work of your teaching committee?

Well, it affects it in all sorts of very subtle ways, I think. I think that as an elite university we get some very good students and I think that when you have very good students you have to be able to stretch some of those students you have to teach at a high level in order not to bore the students and turn them off the subjects. So that is one thing: we have got good students. I think that also there is a competitive ethos between different departments for recruiting good students particularly in the [edited: course name] courses and things like that. So departments do try to make sure that their [edited: course name] courses are actually attractive to the students.

Q.25 In your opinion, what is the single most distinctive feature of the teaching practices of this university that sets it apart from other universities?

The simple answer to that is the [edited: disputation] system.

Q.26 In what ways, if any, does the students quality and background determine the relative emphasis your teaching committee places on teaching and/or learning?

Well, there is always an argument on what you actually mean by teaching and learning. Now, anecdotally, my colleagues and I grumble more and more every year about the fact that the students want to be taught rather than learn for themselves. And we blame collectively the [edited: exam] system for formulating a type of learning which students get used to, in other words they are told: learn these facts, these subjects and you will have success in your [edited: exam] and you will get into a good university and what we are trying to do in University A...what we should be trying to do... is say to the students: now, actually, here are subjects that you can explore for yourself, we will give you the basic information that will enable you to understand how to get into the subject. But you should then develop your habits of independent studying. And that is very difficult at the moment. The good students will do it, but the less good students...

That is what I was going to ask you: Do the students in general cope with that?

Many of the less good students do struggle with this type of approach.

Q.27 Realistically, what effect do student representatives and feedback have upon the quality of teaching and learning within the department/faculty? Can you recall any particular instances of quality improvement occurring on the basis of student reps and feedback?

Yes, I mean I can not quote you absolute chapter and verse but I know that we have, for example, changed lecture courses and actually withdrawn lecture courses which were not being taught well or were extremely unpopular with the students and so on. So yes, the student feedback is always incorporated into the course revision and things like that.

And the student reps are always in your teaching committees?

We have a student representative on our teaching committee.

Q.28 Are there procedures and structures for recognising and rewarding quality teaching within the department/faculty? In your view, how effective are these procedures?

again I am not sure how effective they are. The university has a promotion system and there is the university [edited: promotion] route which is supposed to be for people who do good teaching and so on. Now, it does seem to me that that route is not used as much as it should be because people prefer to go down the research route. There are teaching prizes as well, the [edited: name] teaching prizes.

Can you talk me through this route that some people choose to go through?

Well, the research promotion route is lecturer, [edited: title] to professor. There is a side ways route from lecturer to university [edited: title], now that is supposed to recognise teaching and administrative commitments.

And it stops there, it does not go any further?

It stops there, it does not go any further…

Why is that?

Well, that is because the university did not want to recognise….when that was set up it did not want to explicitly have people who did teaching only.

OK, is that a long time ago?

That is quite a long time ago.

Q.29 According to an author in [edited: name] higher education there are 4 categories of teaching excellence. These are: 1) the lecture-based, 2) the work-based learning, 3) the group work and 4) the participatory dialogue. Which of these categories do you believe that best describes the teaching provisions of your department/faculty?

Well, I think fairly easily, the lecturing one and the fourth one. Because we have students who come and see us and talk about lectures and things like that. We do do a little bit of large group teaching, seminar type, which is the third type.

Q.30 Is there anyone else within the department/faculty that you think will be good for me to seek for an interview?

Well now, within the department you could talk to [edited: name] who is our [edited: course name] course organiser. As far as the [edited: course name] is concerned, well, that is interesting…. What you want to do?

Same questions! I was thinking about [edited: name]…

[edited: name], yes, [edited: he/she] is ex-officio member of the committee but then she is the dean for [edited: M] so she has her own students of the [edited: M]. It would be worth you while, I think perhaps, asking her about the different way in which she approaches the problem of teaching [edited: M] skills and practice to students of the [edited: M].

On the [edited: name] committee, who is the chair of this committee?

There is a guy called [edited: name], who is the chair of the [edited: course name] management committee. Now, who is the chair of the [edited: course name] committee? I am not sure…you have to ask [edited: name].

Any other person that you can think of?

Um, you could talk to Mr. [edited: name] of the [edited: name] who is the director of teaching of the [edited: department name].

Q.31 How professionally and personally rewarding is being the head of a teaching committee?

I am not sure that rewarding is the right word but yes, it is rewarding in that sense that if you get things right you have the feeling that you have produced a good course and that is working well. But…I am not sure that rewarding is, is, is the right word…really the teaching committee is the mechanism to do the job better and if it is working properly, then that is what happens.

Thank you very much.